

John Byrne's
NEXTMEN

FAITH
BOOK 4



g.cady '94

Introduction by Roger Stern

John Byrne's
NEXTMENTM
FAITH
BOOK 4



John Byrne's **NEXTMEN** **FAITH** BOOK 4

Story and art by John Byrne

Art pages 72-81 by Mike Mignola

Colors by Matt Webb

Cover line art by John Byrne

Cover painting by Gary Cody

Introduction by Roger Stern

a Bchry Scan



Dark Horse Comics®

True story: Recently, while I was at a store in Pennsylvania, merrily defacing some comic books with my autograph, someone sidled up to me and asked, "So, Roger, when are you taking over the *Next Men*?"

Now, I hear strange questions all time — "Why did you kill Superman, Roger?" "Who was *really* the Hobgoblin?" "Is it true that wrestling is fixed?" — but this particular inquiry took me so completely by surprise that my train of thought wasn't just lost, it was derailed.

In as calm a tone as I could muster, I pointed out that the full title of the book he was referring to was *John Byrne's Next Men*. And then I asked him where on God's green earth he ever got the idea that I would be crazy enough to follow John on the book even if it were offered to me?!

My questioner shrugged and said, "You followed him on the *Fantastic Four* and *Superman*."

I really should have seen that one coming.

All right, I'll admit it. I *was* crazy enough to follow John onto a book not once, but twice. I hasten to point out that I agreed to take those assignments only on John's recommendation and after a bit of cajoling from our perennial editor, Mike Carlin. And while I've enjoyed myself immensely these past few years, writing stories about the Man of Steel — and occasionally regretted the brevity of my run on the *FF*, — at the time, I didn't exactly jump for joy at the thought of stepping on stage (on page?) after my fan-fave buddy. I'm not a masochist, after all.

At any rate, there ain't going to be a third time. . . because John owns the *Next Men*, lock, stock, and logo.

A bit of history here for the new reader: For most of the sixty-some-year history of comic books, comics have been owned primarily by publishers. If you wrote a *Spider-Man* story, it belonged to Marvel; if you drew a *Batman* story, it belonged to DC. The work you produced became the property of whichever company owned the characters, and that was that. Some companies may have occasionally given some creators a slightly better financial deal, but the publishers held the control. I'm not saying that it's impossible to produce good comics under those conditions — scores of fondly remembered stories prove otherwise — but, well. . .

Say that you created a character — call him Swellguy — for Publisher X. Let's also say that Swellguy becomes phenomenally popular. Publisher X suddenly demands more titles starring Swellguy, and if you can't produce them, he'll find someone who can.

Or say that a toy company wants to market a Swellguy Scooter, and the publisher wants you to show Swellguy using said scooter in his next adventure. You say that Swellguy doesn't need a scooter and would look ridiculous riding one? Okay, if you don't want to do the story, someone else will.

Or say that your old editor has been replaced by a new editor who thinks that Swellguy needs to be grimmer and grittier. So what if this change would be a total violation of the character? You do as the editor says, or you're out.

But over the past couple of decades, there have been some changes within the comics industry. Some creative folks have turned to self-publishing. New companies such as Dark Horse have come along, providing a venue in which writers and artists could own their work. Even publishing giants DC and Marvel have published a few creator-owned projects. Slowly, but surely, writers and artists have started keeping control.

Happily, that is the case with *John Byrne's Next Men*. In fact, the comics in this collection were among the first to appear under the Legend icon (Legend being the creator-owned imprint used by Arthur Adams, Mike Allred, Paul Chadwick, Geoff Darrow, Dave Gibbons, Mike Mignola, and Frank Miller, as well as John).

That's why you won't see a *Spectacular Next Men*, or a *Next Men: The Kids of The Greenery*, or a *Next Men Adventures* . . . unless, of course, John wants them published.

That's why you won't see the *Next Men* meet characters from other comics. . . unless John and another creator wish it so (as with the guest-appearance of Mike Mignola's Hellboy within these pages).

That's why *I* won't be writing the *Next Men*.

And if John *thinks* about offering it to me, I'm gonna give him such a smack!!

"Faith," the story which you are about to read — or have already read, if you're predisposed to skip ahead of introductions — originally appeared as part of an ongoing serial. While fairly complete unto itself, this book is part of a larger, continuing comic novel. There are three earlier collections (four if you count John Byrne's *2112*), which introduced the world of the Next Men, and they come highly recommended by yours truly. But in case you haven't read them, or could simply use a few reminders, allow me to fill you in on what has gone before...

Nathan, Bethany, Danny, Jasmine, and Jack are the Next Men. . . the products, if you will, of a government biological research station based in the American Southwest. Unbeknownst to both the public and the authorities, the station has — under the supervision of Senator Aldus Hilltop — secretly nurtured these super-powered beings as part of a project to produce the next step in human evolution.

Hilltop himself is in a secret partnership with Sathanas, a cyborg from the twenty-second century who has been using his knowledge of our future to manipulate the Senator's career since the mid-fifties.

When Tony Murcheson — an agent of the top-secret federal science commission headed by one Willis Ducummen (code-named "Control") — gets too close to uncovering Project Next Men, Hilltop decides that he must cover his tracks. He sets a charge which destroys the base, killing everyone who could implicate him.

Murcheson helps the Next Men escape, but while making that escape her young charges are branded as terrorists and blamed for the destruction of the facility. Ducummen initially shields the Next Men from these trumped-up charges.

Danny, the youngest Next Man, eventually makes his way to New York City, searching for Action Maxx, a comic-book character whom he believes to be real. His search brings him to Ben Horowitz, the head of Dollar Comics, who puts him in the care of Sandy Tolliver, a young production staffer not much older than Danny. In a moment of weakness, Sandy seduces Danny, an act which triggers a number of interesting changes in her. Unaware of this, Horowitz sees an opportunity to boost Dollar Comics' circulation by promoting Danny and his fellow Next Men as real-life superheroes. Surprisingly, Ducummen goes along with Horowitz's plan.

Once the Next Men go public, however, federal agents arrest them for the deaths of the personnel killed in the destruction of the research station. Their trial gains national media attention, especially from two Chicago-based reporters — Donna Wojciechowski and Walker Stone — who have had their own prior experience with "mutates" like the Next Men.*

Let's see, anything else? Ah, yes. . .

Danny has a "twin sister" — Gillian — who exists as a disembodied mind which once shared his brain and body. Gillian is presently inhabiting the body of Chrissy Colby, hers and Danny's half-sister by their biological mother, Mary Ellen Colby. When Gillian discovers that Mary Ellen has been abusing Chrissy, she possesses the woman long enough to give her a taste of her own medicine.

A man named Thomas Kirkland has appeared in Oklahoma, claiming to be from the year 2115. He has been institutionalized in the Bentham Psychiatric Facility.

Aldus Hilltop has just become president of the United States (and I thought Nixon was bad!).

And, as our story opens, the Next Men have been found guilty on all counts and are being held to await sentencing.

Of course, there's much more to the story than what I've just outlined, but I don't want to give away everything. Don't worry, you'll find out what you need to know as the story unfolds. Just go with the flow and remember that in the world of the Next Men, as in life, no one should be taken merely at face value. There are depths to these characters, these people, which just may surprise you.

—Roger Stern 11/18/94

*In John's prose novel *Whipping Boy*, but that's another story.

FAITH

1

*Of all escape mechanisms,
death is the most efficient.*
H.L. Mencken
1880 - 1956

YES!!!

I AM
FREE!!

NEW YORK NEWS
PRESIDENT
DEAD

CEREBRAL
PERFORMANCE
CLAIMS LIFE OF
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
HILLTOP
SWORN IN

EROTIC
MASSAGES
"LET US RUB YOUR
TROUBLE AWAY"
655-HEAT

GIRLS
GIRLS
GIRLS
655-3ARE



BUT...
WHERE AM
I...?

IT HAS THE
LOOK AND
FEEL OF A
CITY.

BUT
WHAT A
CITY!

AS THOUGH
A THOUSAND
NEW YORKS HAD
BEEN CRAMMED
ONTO MANHATTAN
ISLAND!

THE SOUNDS!
THE SMELLS! EVEN
I, DOCTOR TROGG,
AM VERY NEARLY
OVERWHELMED!



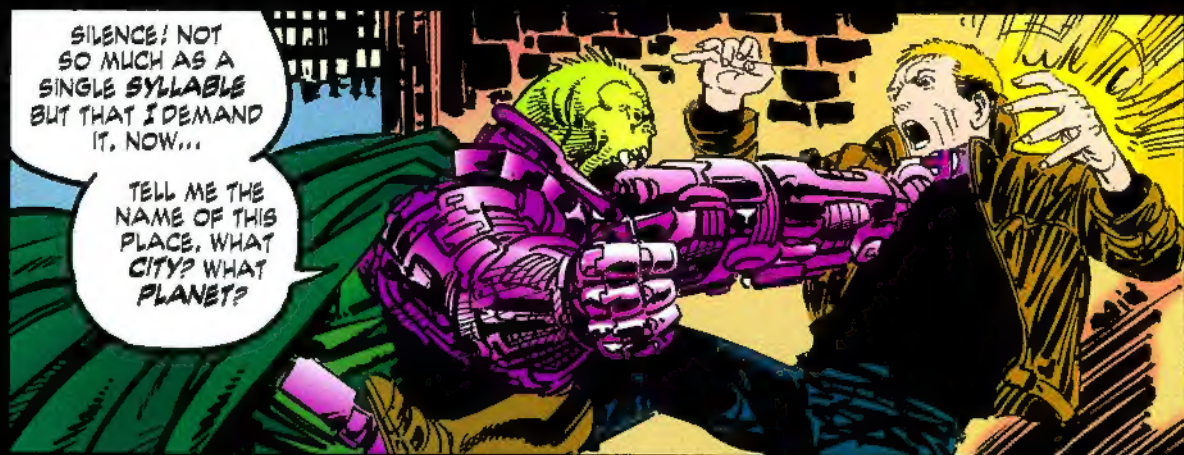
MY FIRST
CONSIDERATION,
THEN, SHOULD BE
AN ACCURATE
ASSESSMENT OF
MY LOCATION.

AND FOR
THAT I
NEED...

...A
NATIVE.

WHU...?!





SILENCE! NOT SO MUCH AS A SINGLE SYLLABLE BUT THAT I DEMAND IT, NOW...

TELL ME THE NAME OF THIS PLACE, WHAT CITY? WHAT PLANET?



PLANET...? HEY, MAN, WHAT PLANET DID YOU...

AH-HAGH!!



YOU DID NOT LISTEN, DR. TROGG IS TO BE HEEDED.

D-DOCTOR TROGG??

Y-YOU MEAN, LIKE, THE ACTION MAXX VILLAIN DOCTOR TROGG?

DR. TROGG IS TO BE OBEYED!



AHH! THEN MY NEMESIS IS KNOWN HERE, IS HE?

BUT STILL YOU HAVE NOT ANSWERED MY QUESTIONS...

NEW YORK! THIS IS NEW YORK, ON THE PLANET EARTH!



NO! SUCH
A THING CANNOT
BE! UNLESS...

I HAVE NO
MEMORY OF HOW
OR WHY I CAME
HERE.

ONLY A CON-
SUMING SENSE
OF SUDDEN
FREEDOM.

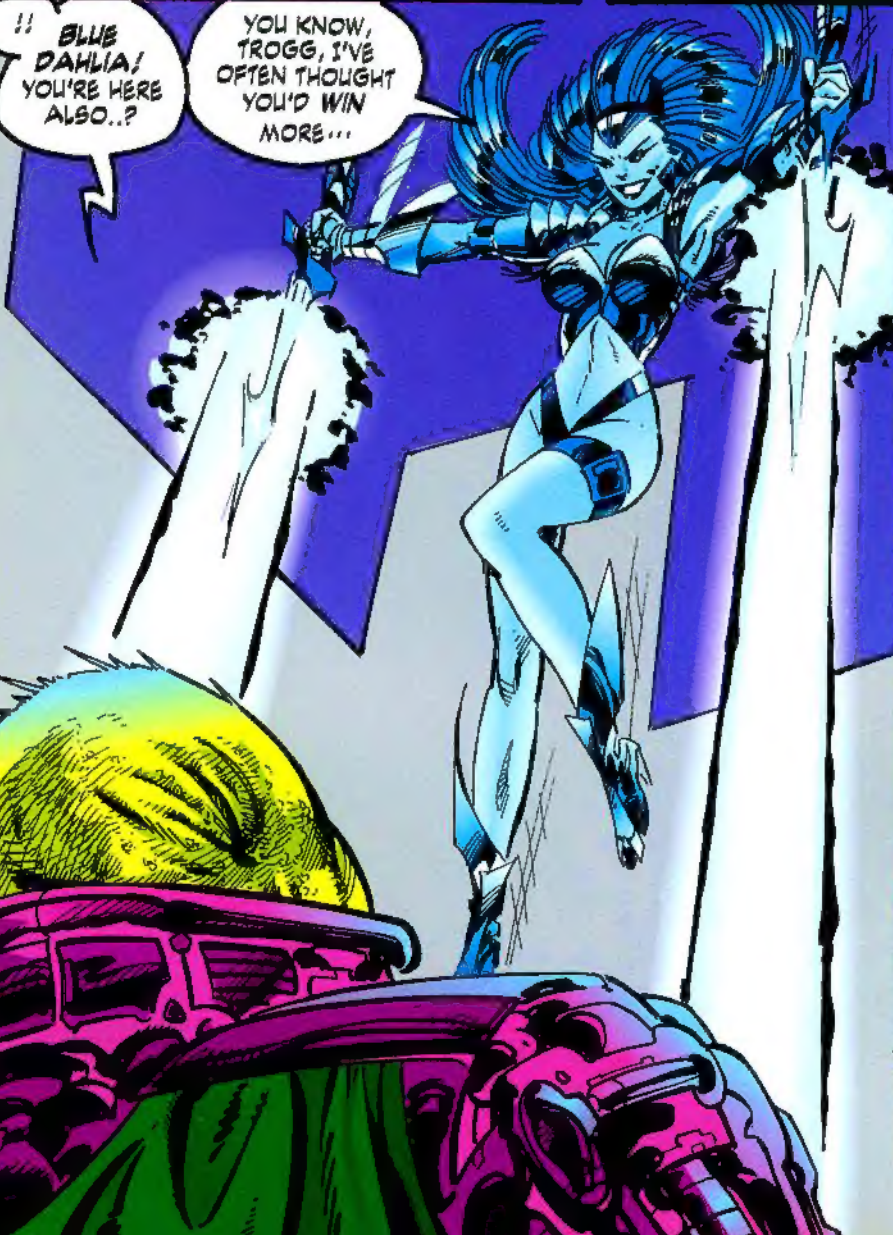


WAS I BATTLING
ACTION MAXX? DID
HE FIND SOME WAY
TO DEFEAT ME?

PERHAPS
TO HURL ME
ACROSS TIME
AND SPACE...

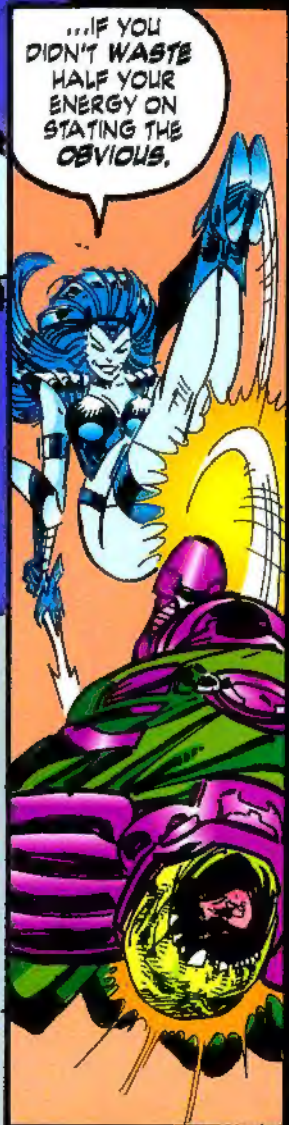
...INTO
THIS **PARALLEL**
WORLD..?

THAT'S
SOMETHING
YOU'LL NEVER
KNOW,
TROGG!



!! **BLUE**
DAHLIA!
YOU'RE HERE
ALSO..?

YOU KNOW,
TROGG, I'VE
OFTEN THOUGHT
YOU'D WIN
MORE...



...IF YOU
DIDN'T WASTE
HALF YOUR
ENERGY ON
STATING THE
OBVIOUS.

EXCELLENT,
MY DEAR!
ACTION MAXX
TRAINED YOU
WELL!

OH, MAN!
THIS SHIT IS
GETTING TOO
WEIRD!

WHAT IS THIS,
SOME KINDA
MOVIE OR
SOMETHIN'?

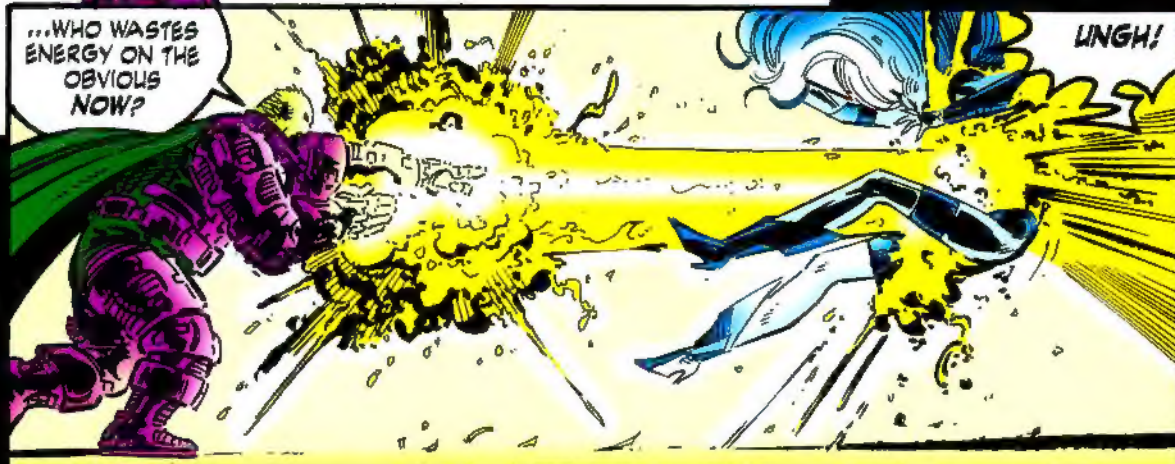
MOVIE...?
THIS IS NO
MOVIE, MY
FRIEND.

DR. TROGG
IS VERY REAL
AND VERY
DANGEROUS.



AND WHO
IS IT, DEAR
DAHLIA...

...WHO WASTES
ENERGY ON THE
OBVIOUS
NOW?

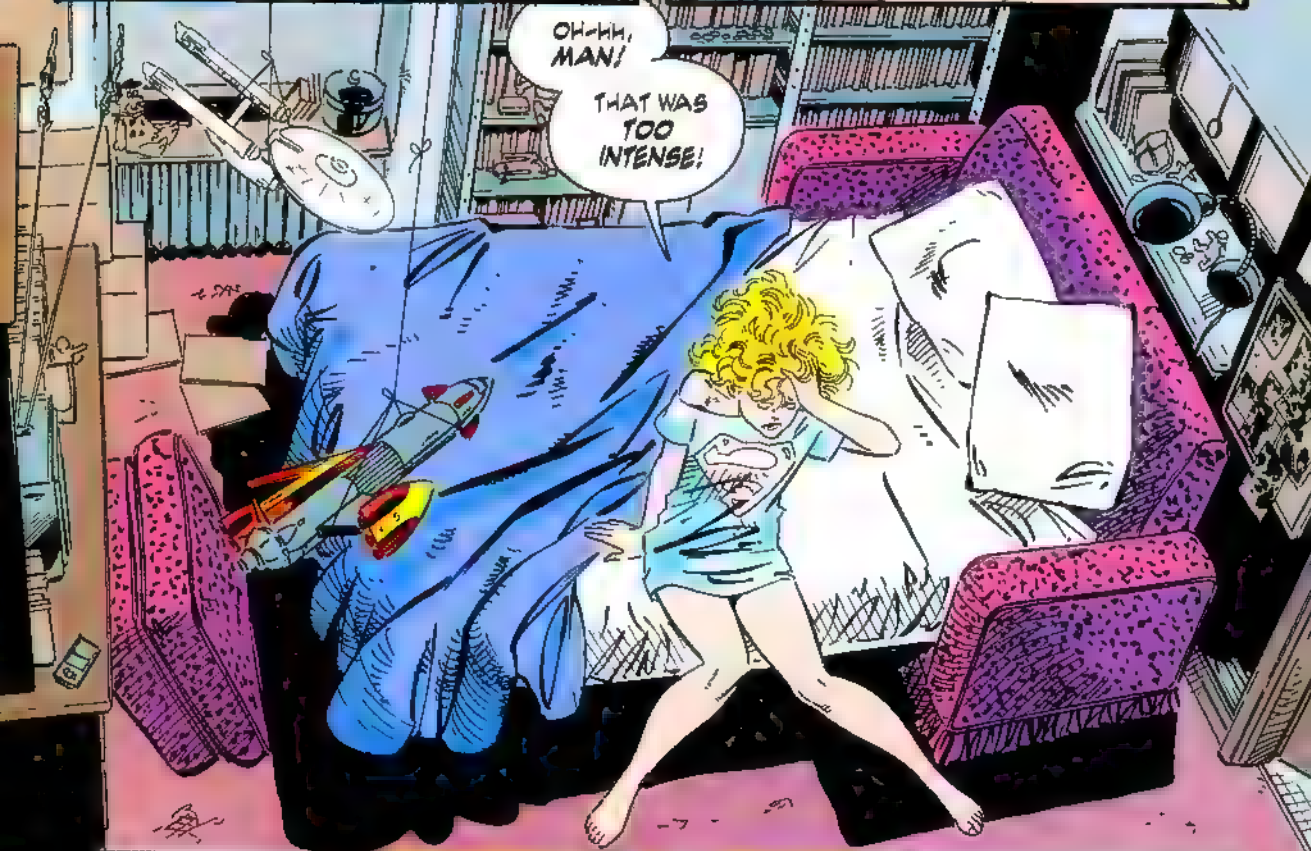


UUGH!

YOU DISAPPOINT
ME, CHILD. AS A STUDENT
OF MY GREATEST ENEMY, I
WOULD HAVE EXPECTED
MORE OF A CHALLENGE
FROM YOU.

NOW...





OH-HH,
MAN!

THAT WAS
TOO
INTENSE!

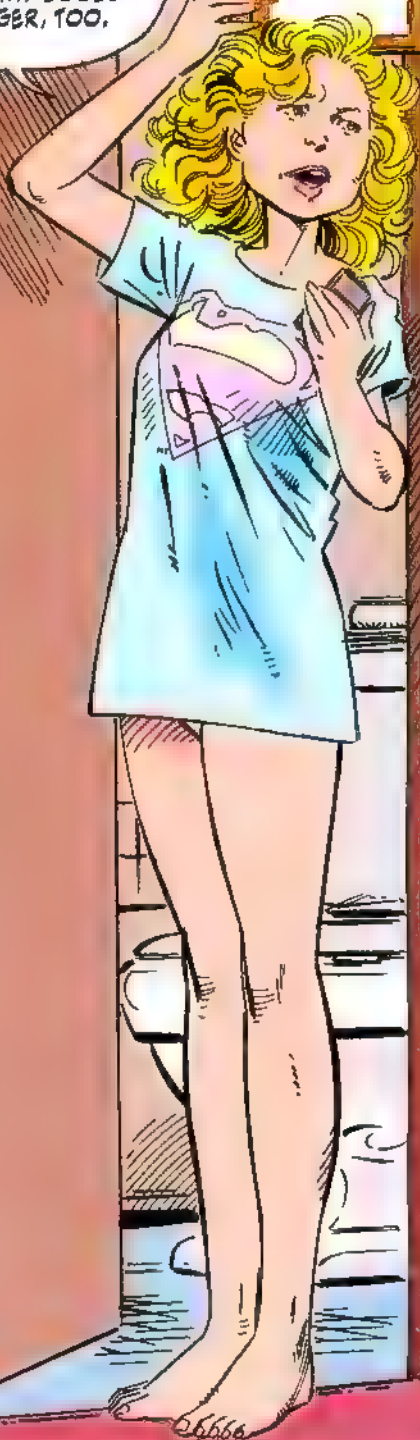
WHERE'S
THAT TAPE
RECORDER?

DIARY
ENTRY, APRIL
TENTH,

THINGS HAVE
NOT STOPPED
GETTING
WEIRDER,

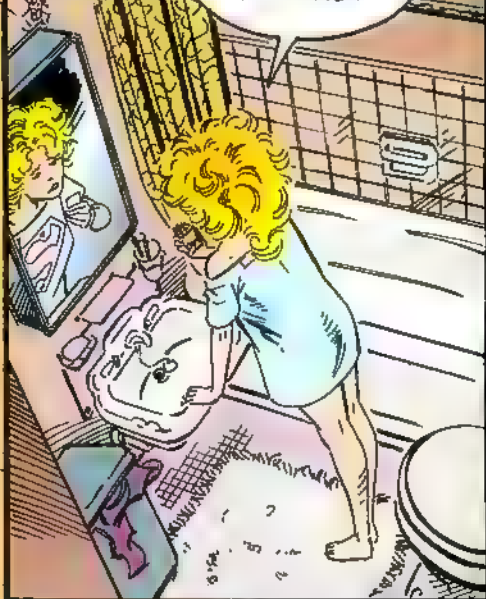


I'M UP ANOTHER
INCH SINCE YESTER-
DAY, AND I DON'T
NEED A TAPE MEASURE
TO KNOW MY BOOBS
ARE BIGGER, TOO.



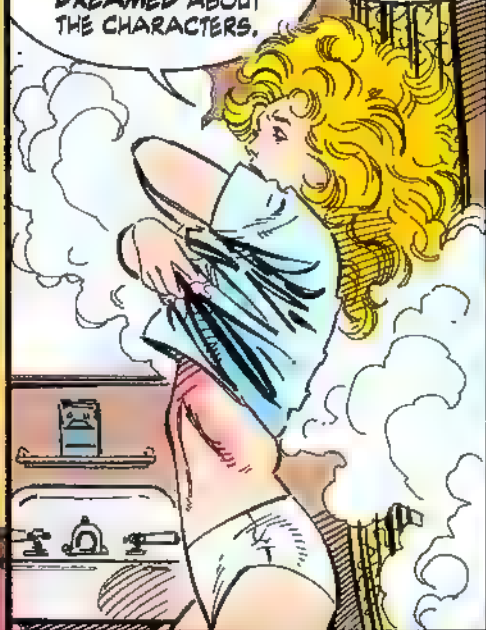
NOW I'M
DREAMING ABOUT
BEING BLUE
DAHLIA.

I MEAN--
OKAY, SHE WAS
ALWAYS MY
FAVORITE...



...BUT EVEN THOUGH
I'VE SPENT MY WHOLE
LIFE AS A COMIC-BOOK
FAN, I'VE NEVER ONCE
DREAMED ABOUT
THE CHARACTERS.

ESPECIALLY
NOT ABOUT
BEING ONE.



SIGHE
MAYBE IT'S
ALL PART OF
WHATEVER MY
BODY IS GOING
THROUGH. MY DOCTOR
CAN'T FIND ANY-
THING WRONG
WITH ME...

...BUT I'M
STARTING TO GET
A BIT TIRED OF
THE WOLF WHISTLES
I GET EVERY TIME I
WALK INTO THE
BULLPEN.



"MAYBE I SHOULD TAKE
THAT VACATION MR.
HOROWITZ OFFERED."

MURCHESON,
SOCIAL SERVICES.
I'M HERE TO
SEE THE
PRISONERS.

YEAH?
NOBODY TOLD
US. WHAT'S S.S.
GOT TO DO WITH
THIS?



THREE OF
THEM ARE
MINORS.

AS SUCH THEY
FALL UNDER THE
JURISDICTION OF MY
DEPARTMENT.

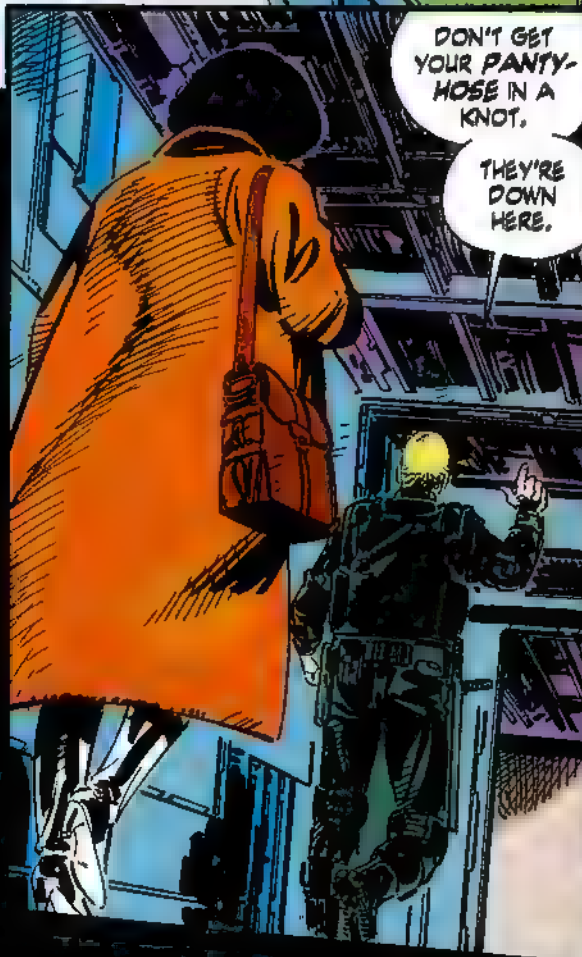
NOW,
CAN I SEE
THEM?

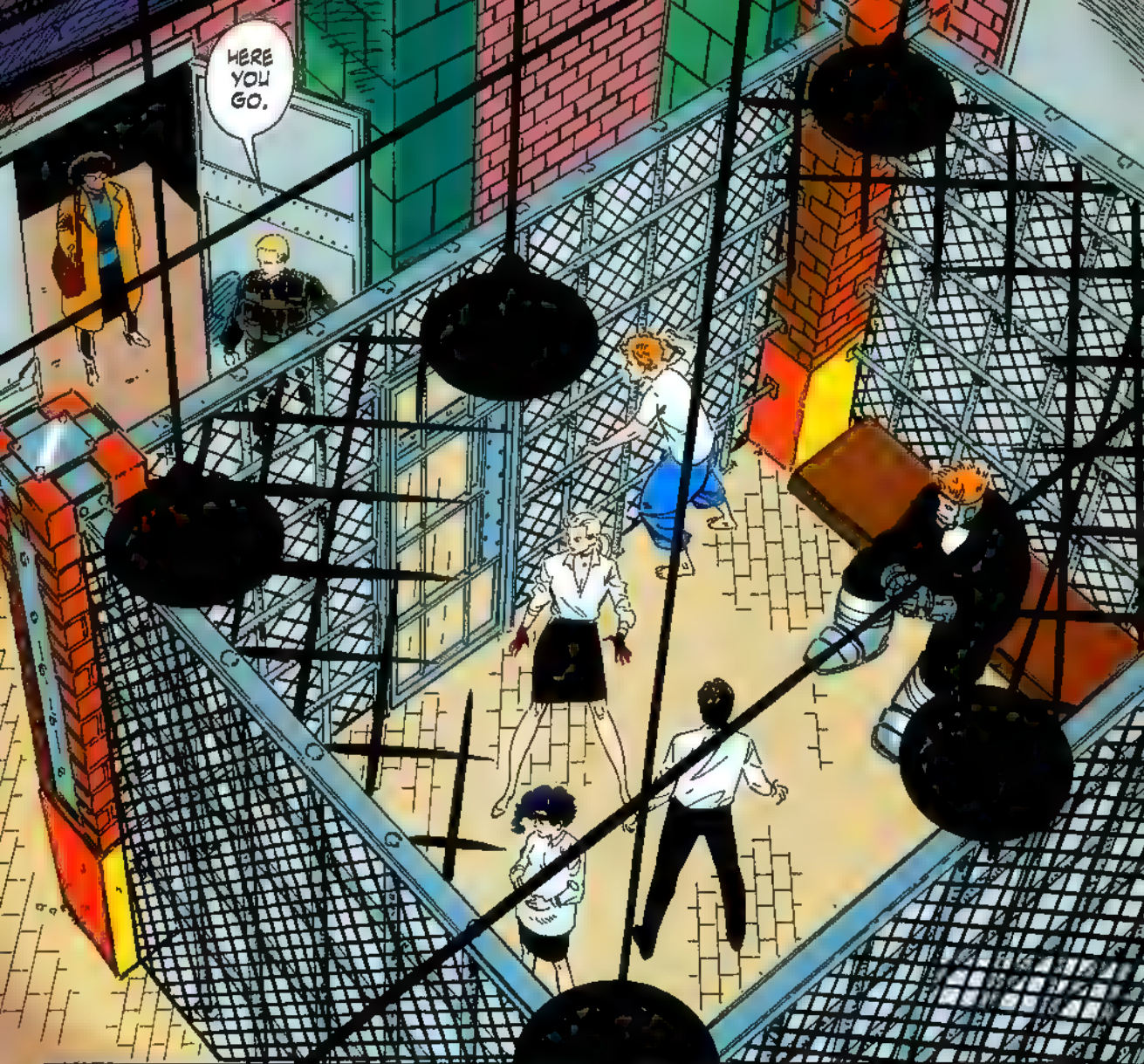
SURE,
SURE.



DON'T GET
YOUR PANTY-
HOSE IN A
KNOT.

THEY'RE
DOWN
HERE.



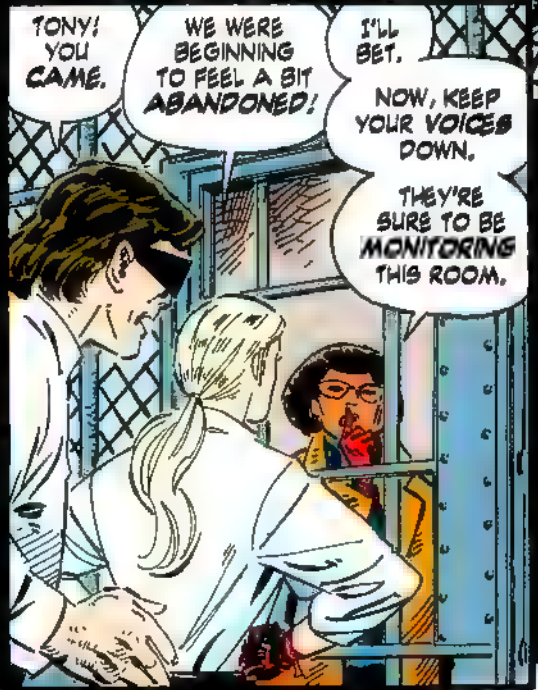


HERE YOU GO.



YOU NEED ME TO HANG AROUND?

NO, I CAN HANDLE THIS FROM HERE. THANKS.



TONY! YOU CAME.

WE WERE BEGINNING TO FEEL A BIT ABANDONED!

I'LL BET.

NOW, KEEP YOUR VOICES DOWN.

THEY'RE SURE TO BE MONITORING THIS ROOM.



LISTEN, KIDS, I'M GOING TO BE STRAIGHT WITH YOU.

CONTROL DOESN'T KNOW I'M HERE. THIS IS NOT AN AUTHORIZED COMMISSION.

THEN... WHAT IS IT?



IN TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS, BETHANY...



"...IT'S A JAILBREAK."

WALKER, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS.

HEY, NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED, CHOW.

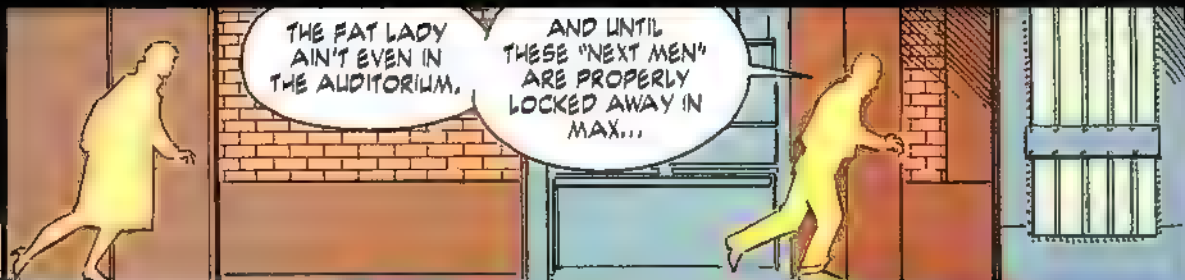


SURE--BUT THIS ISN'T CHICAGO.

THERE'RE NO FAVORS YOU CAN CALL IN IF WE END UP WITH OUR FAT IN THE FIRE.

NEVER A TRUER WORD SPOKEN.

BUT YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT THIS STORY IS NOT DONE YET.



THE FAT LADY
AIN'T EVEN IN
THE AUDITORIUM.

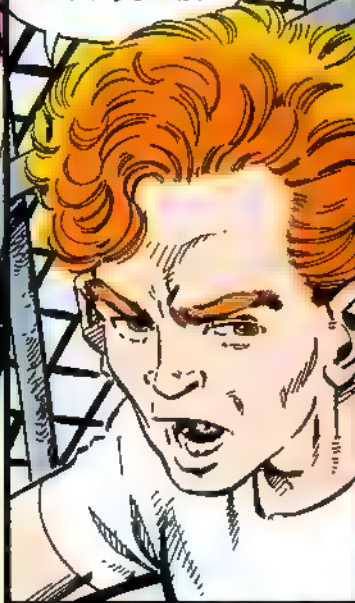
AND UNTIL
THESE "NEXT MEN"
ARE PROPERLY
LOCKED AWAY IN
MAX...

HOLD
IT...



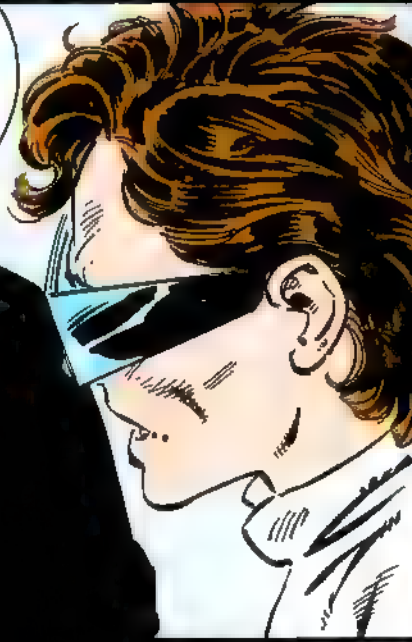
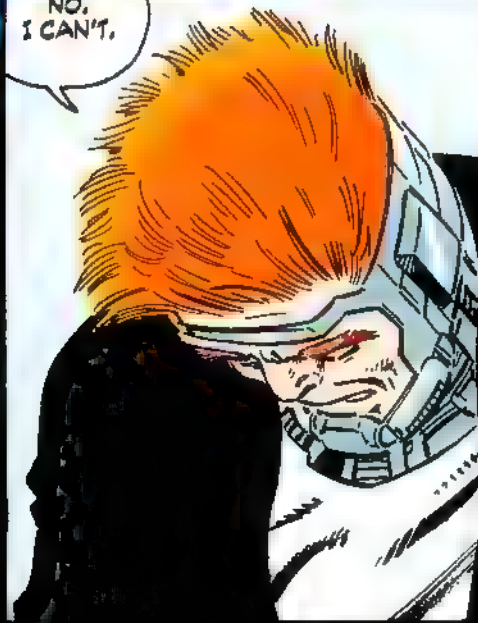
"WE MAY HAVE SOME DIFFICULTY
GETTING PAST THEM..."

COME ON,
JACK! IT WOULD
TAKE TOO LONG
FOR BETHANY TO
CUT THE BARS!



NO.
I CAN'T.

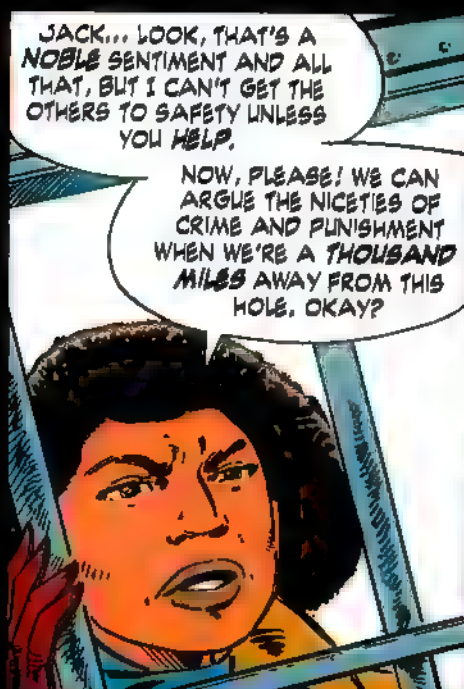
JACK! OF
COURSE YOU
CAN! THESE BARS
ARE NOTHING TO
SOMEONE WITH
YOUR STRENGTH!





STRENGTH ISN'T THE POINT, NATHAN. I TOLD YOU BEFORE THE GUILTY VERDICT THAT I UNDERSTOOD WHAT I'D DONE WAS WRONG.

THAT I SHOULD BE PUNISHED FOR IT.



JACK... LOOK, THAT'S A NOBLE SENTIMENT AND ALL THAT, BUT I CAN'T GET THE OTHERS TO SAFETY UNLESS YOU HELP.

NOW, PLEASE! WE CAN ARGUE THE NICETIES OF CRIME AND PUNISHMENT WHEN WE'RE A THOUSAND MILES AWAY FROM THIS HOLE. OKAY?



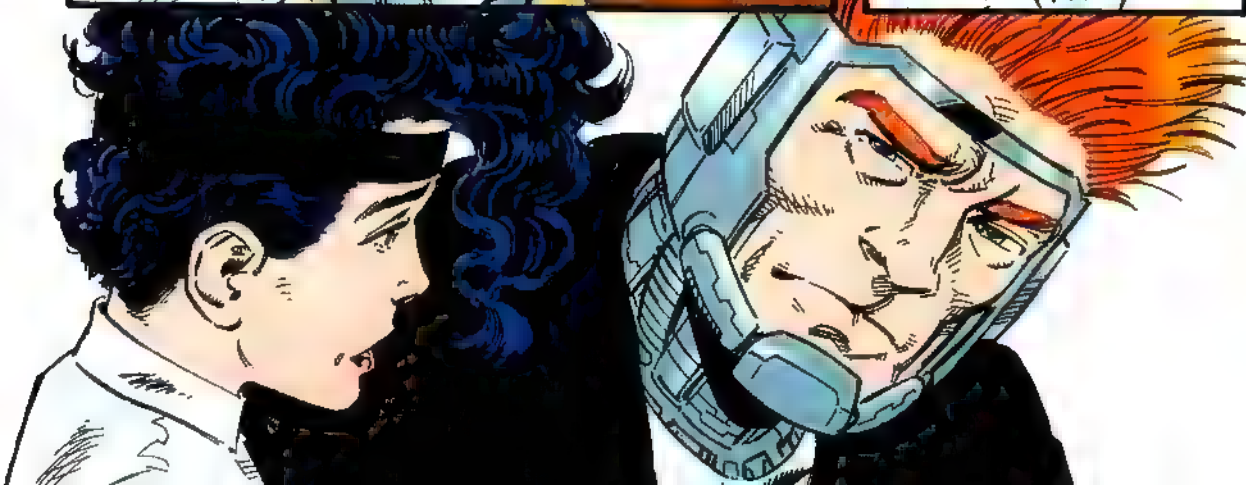
JACK... PLEASE. I KNOW I'VE HURT YOU, BUT PLEASE LISTEN TO ME NOW.

I HAVE A CHILD GROWING INSIDE ME. I WISH IT WAS YOUR CHILD, NOW I UNDERSTAND HOW THAT WORKS. BUT IT ISN'T, AND THERE'S NOTHING ANYONE CAN DO ABOUT THAT.

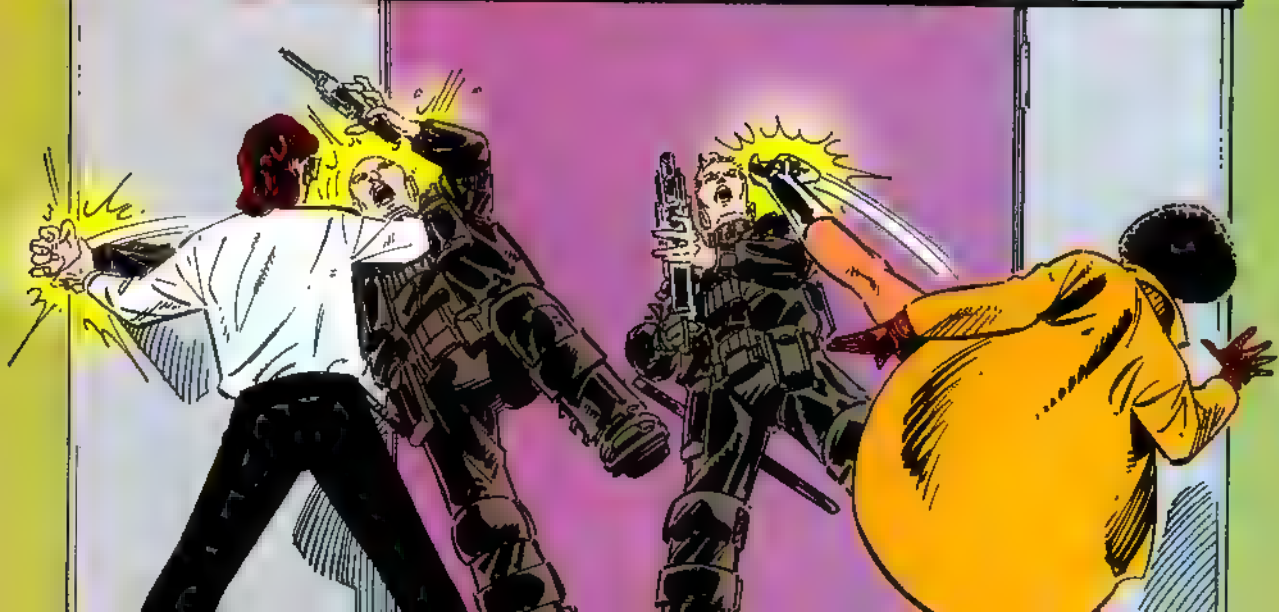
BUT THERE IS SOMETHING WE CAN ALL DO ABOUT OUR SITUATION.



JACK... I DON'T WANT MY BABY BORN IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.









OKAY...
THEY'LL BE
SNOOZING
FOR A BIT.

C'MON.

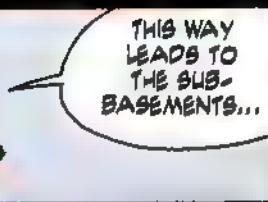


TONY...? THAT'S
NOT THE WAY WE
WERE BROUGHT
IN..?

NO.



IF WE GO BACK
THAT WAY WE'LL
BE HEADING FOR THE
BUSIEST PART OF
THE BUILDING.

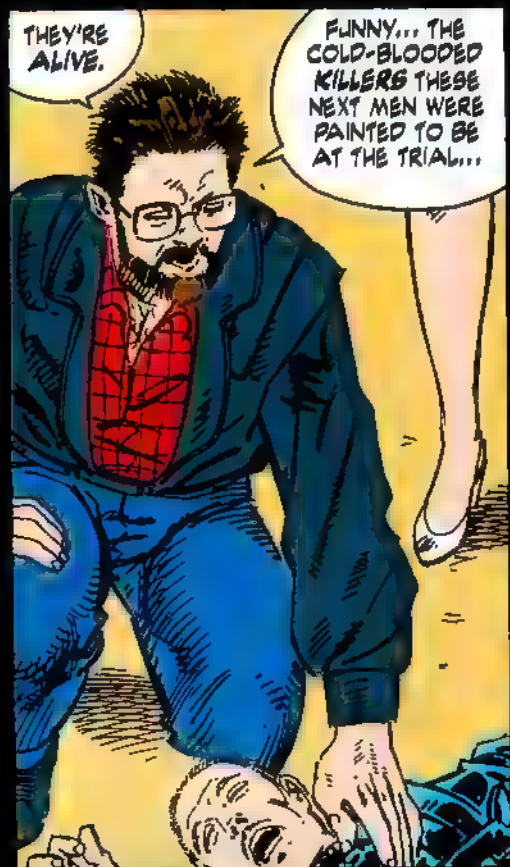


THIS WAY
LEADS TO
THE SUB-
BASEMENTS...



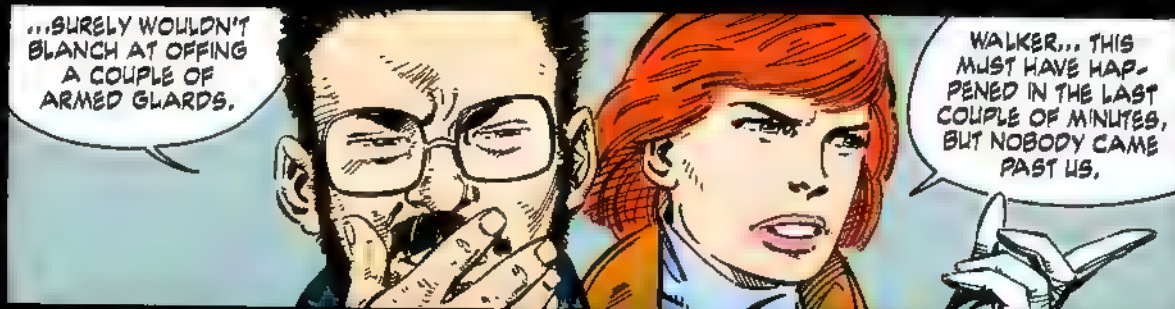
"...AND, UNLESS I MISS MY
GUESS, A WAY OUT."

WALKER...!



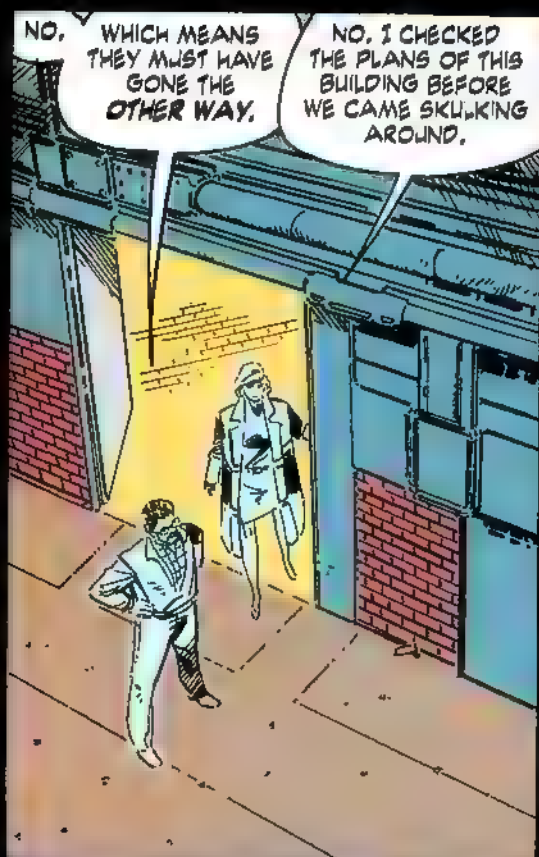
THEY'RE
ALIVE.

FUNNY... THE
COLD-BLOODED
KILLERS THESE
NEXT MEN WERE
PAINTED TO BE
AT THE TRIAL...



...SURELY WOULDN'T BLANCH AT OFFING A COUPLE OF ARMED GLARDS.

WALKER... THIS MUST HAVE HAPPENED IN THE LAST COUPLE OF MINUTES, BUT NOBODY CAME PAST US.



NO, WHICH MEANS THEY MUST HAVE GONE THE OTHER WAY.

NO, I CHECKED THE PLANS OF THIS BUILDING BEFORE WE CAME SKULKING AROUND.

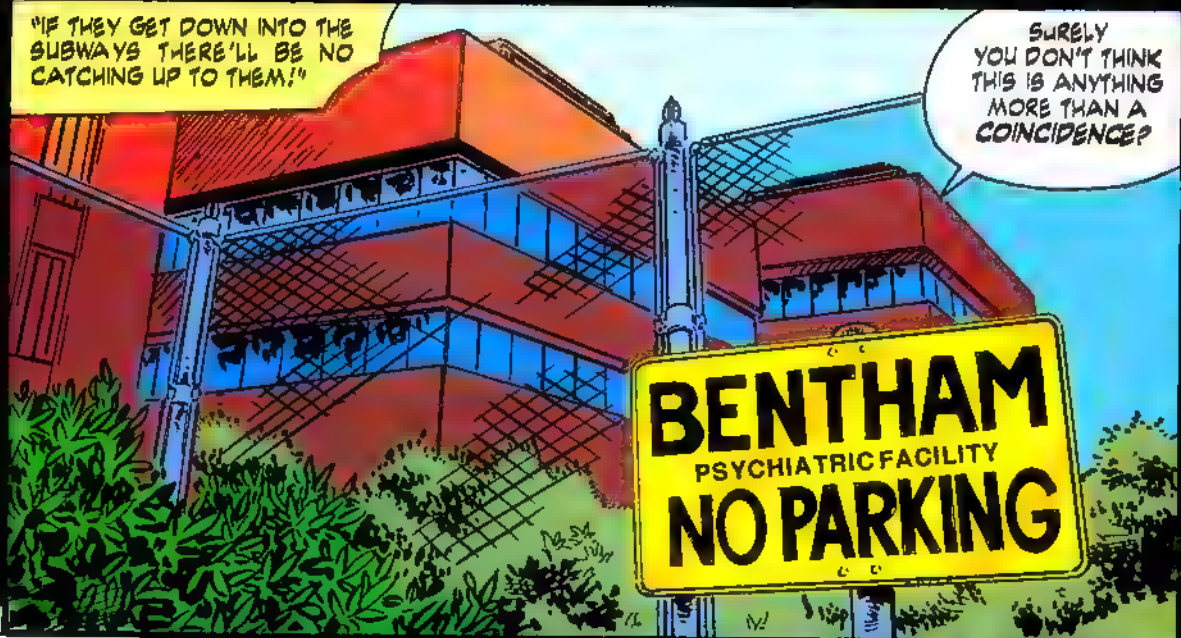


THERE'S NOTHING THAT WAY BUT...

...SUB-BASEMENTS...

AND THE SUBWAY LINES UNDER THIS BUILDING WERE AMONG THE ONES THAT GOT CLOSED DOWN.

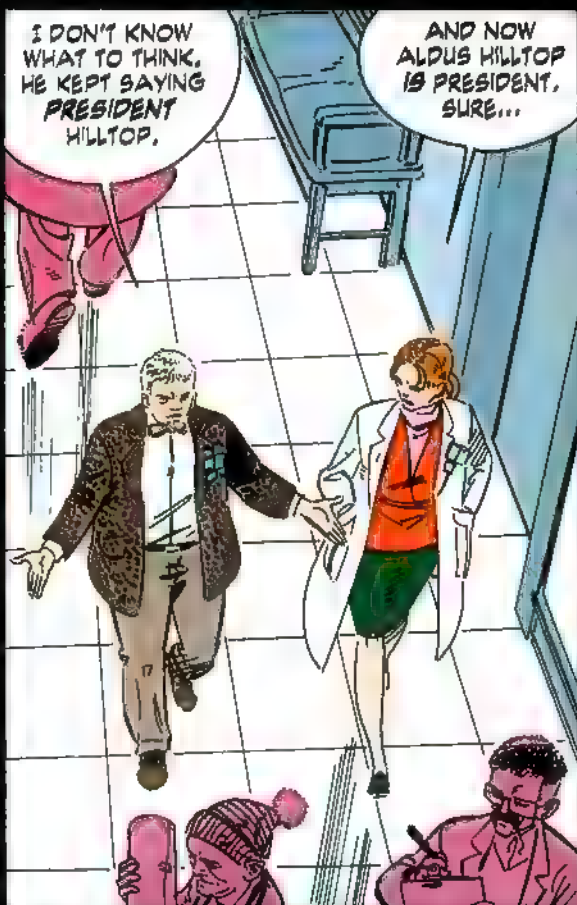
COME ON, CHOW.



"IF THEY GET DOWN INTO THE SUBWAYS THERE'LL BE NO CATCHING UP TO THEM."

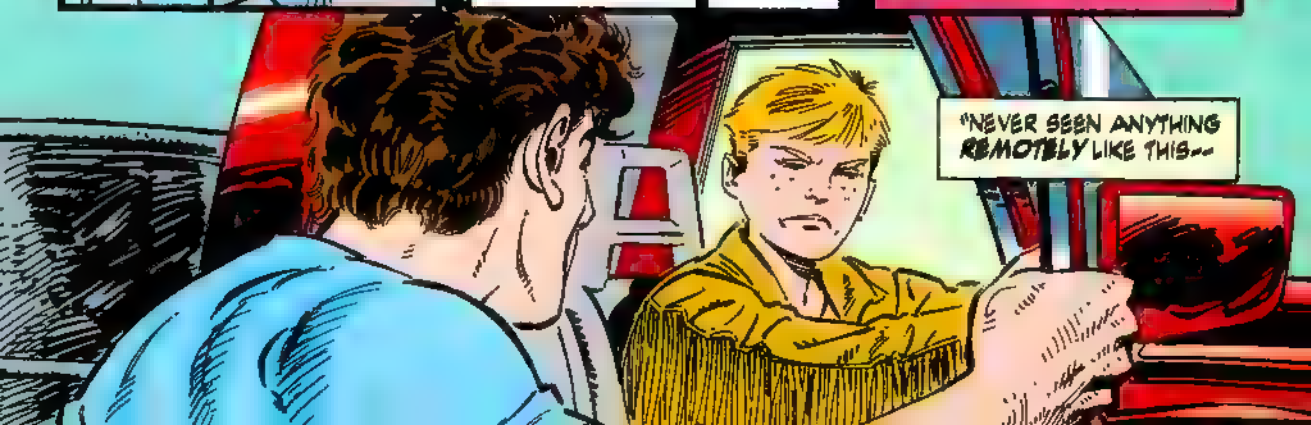
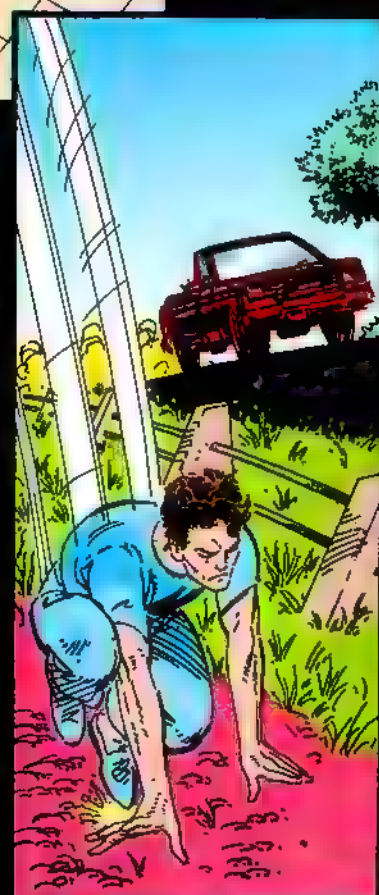
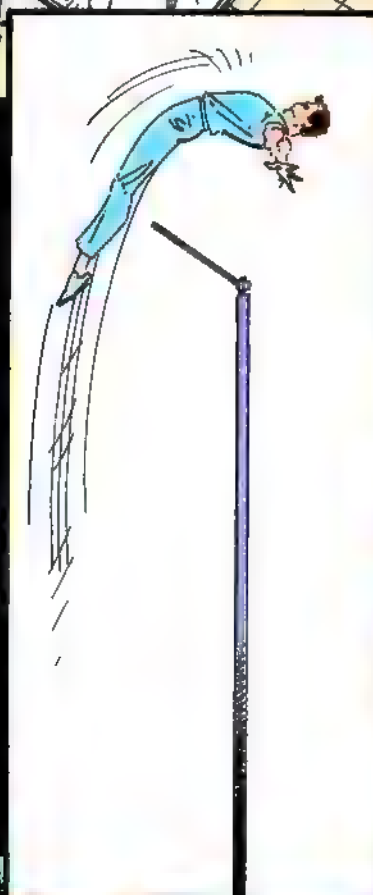
SURELY YOU DON'T THINK THIS IS ANYTHING MORE THAN A COINCIDENCE?

BENTHAM
PSYCHIATRIC FACILITY
NO PARKING





PARKINSON!



"NEVER SEEN ANYTHING REMOTELY LIKE THIS--"

--AND
I'VE SEEN SOME
STRANGE ONES.

THIS IS THE
WOMAN WHO
BEAT HERSELF
UP?

YES. THOUGH THAT'S
NOT HER VERSION
OF IT, ACCORDING
TO HER SHE WAS
POSSESSED.

LIKE...
BY DEVILS?

OH, NO,
NOTHING SO
PEDESTRIAN.

NO, SHE SAYS
IT WAS THE GHOST
OF HER DEAD
DAUGHTER. A GHOST
THAT'S EVIDENTLY BEEN
LIVING IN HER SON'S
HEAD...

...BUT LATELY
HAS MOVED INTO
HER OTHER
DAUGHTER.

AND THIS SON...
HE'S THE ONE THEY
CALL "SPEEDBOY,"
YES? ONE OF THESE
"NEXT MEN."

THAT'S
THE ONE. SO,
AS YOU CAN
IMAGINE...



"...WE GIVE HER STORY
CONSIDERABLY MORE
CREDENCE THAN WE MIGHT
OTHERWISE..."

OKAY, THIS
IS AS FAR AS
WE CAN GO BY
CONVENTIONAL
MEANS.

NOW IT'S
UP TO YOU
AGAIN, JACK.

WHAT DO YOU
WANT ME TO DO?
THERE'S NO WAY
OUT OF HERE BUT
BACK THE WAY
WE CAME.

YES,
THERE
IS.

TWO YEARS
AGO RED INK FORCED
THE CITY TO CLOSE DOWN
ALMOST TWO THIRDS OF
THE SUBWAY LINES. ONE
OF THOSE LINES IS RIGHT
UNDER OUR FEET.

I WANT YOU
TO PUNCH THROUGH
THIS FLOOR AND OPEN
US A PASSAGE DOWN
INTO THE TUNNELS.

ALL RIGHT.

BUT THIS IS THE
LAST THING I
DO,



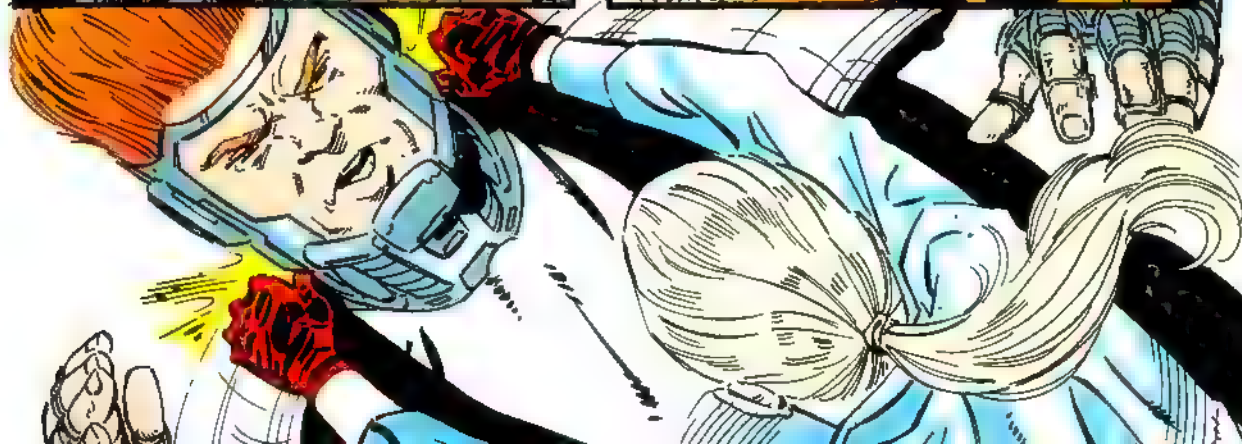
THERE,
NOW I'M GOING
BACK UP TO
TURN MYSELF
IN.

JACK,
NO! YOU MUST
COME WITH
US!



NO, TONY.
I'VE MADE UP
MY MIND ABOUT
THIS. IT'S SOME-
THING I HAVE
TO DO.

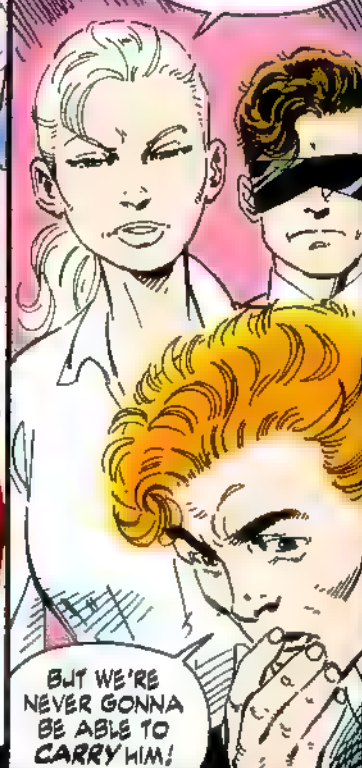
JACK...





BETHANY!

WE COULDN'T LEAVE HIM, AND I KNOW HOW STUBBORN JACK CAN BE...



BUT WE'RE NEVER GONNA BE ABLE TO CARRY HIM!

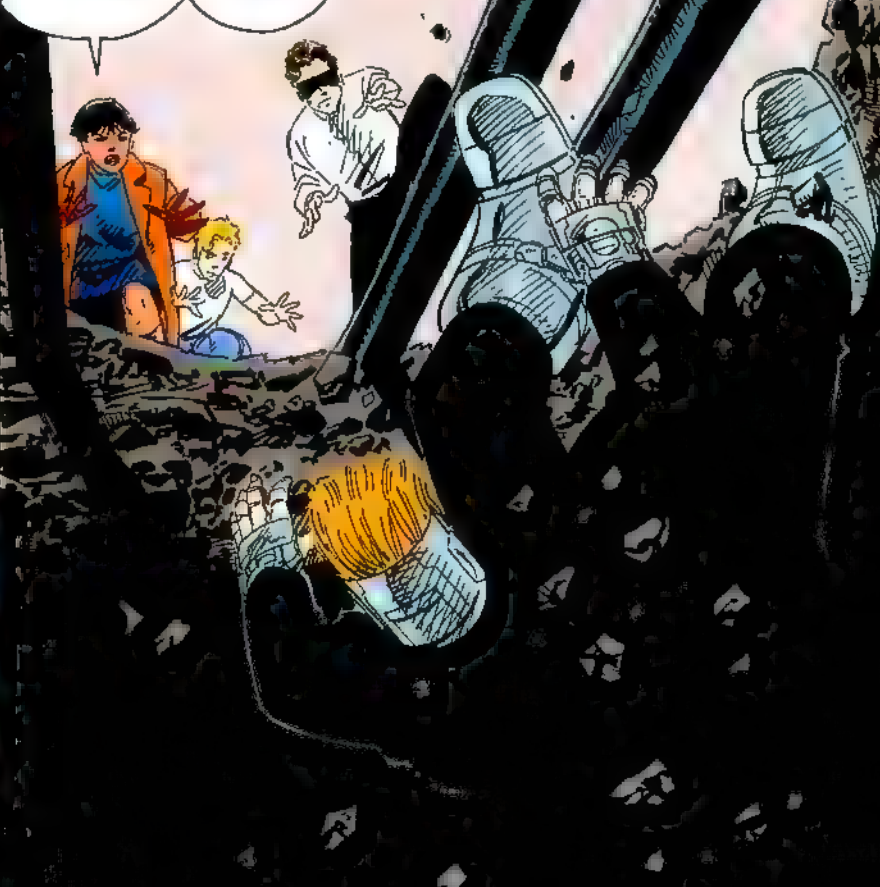


ROLL HIM DOWN THE HOLE.

HIS ARMOR WILL PROTECT HIM FROM THE WORST OF IT.

PRAGMATIC, TO SAY THE LEAST.

OKAY... DOWN HE GOES!





AND
DOWN WE
GO.

HMM!
THIS IS
NICE.

IT'S SO
DARK, NATHAN,
CAN YOU...

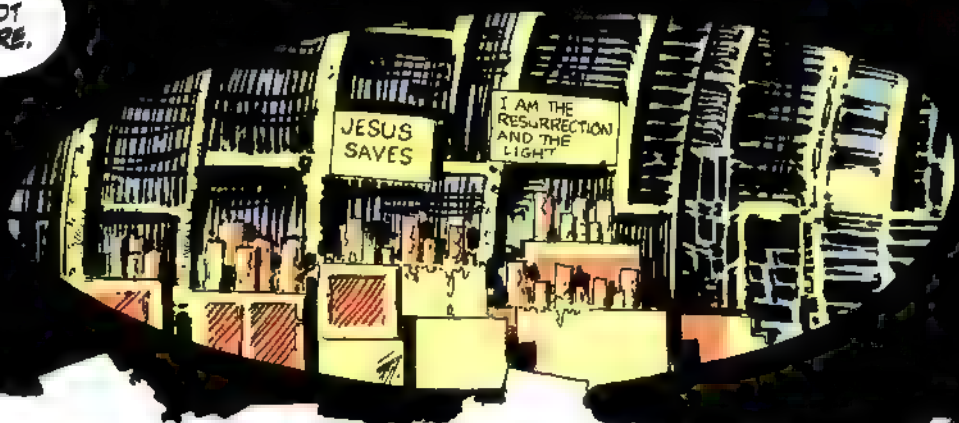
HEY!
WHERE'S
JACK??

HE'S GONE! I CAN'T SEE
HIM ON INFRARED, AND
ALL THE METAL PIPING IS
SCREWING UP MY X-RAY
RECEPTION.

THERE!

T-TONY...
WHAT IS THIS
PLACE..?

I'M NOT
SO SURE.



IT SHOULD BE
NOTHING MORE THAN
A DISUSED MAIN-
TENANCE TUNNEL...

BUT THIS
LOOKS ALMOST...
LIVED IN...



DO NOT BE
AFRAID, MY
FRIENDS.

YOU
ARE SAFE
NOW.



"ALL ARE WELCOME HERE."

...CONTINUE
THEIR SEARCH FOR
THE SO-CALLED
"NEXT MEN," WHO
ESCAPED EARLIER
TODAY.

COMMISSIONER
RANDOLPH TWEED
ISSUED A STATEMENT
ASSURING NEW YORKERS
THAT THE NEXT MEN
WOULD BE APPRE-
HENDED WITHIN HOURS.

TURNING TO THE
LIGHTER SIDE OF THE
NEWS... TWENTY-SIX-YEAR-
OLD GRAPHIC ARTIST
GARRISON CARTER WAS
RELEASED FROM BELLEVUE
HOSPITAL...

...FOLLOWING WHAT
HE REPORTED AS AN
EARLY MORNING EN-
COUNTER WITH ACTION
MAXX SUPERVILLAIN
DOCTOR TROGG.

CARTER CLAIMS TO HAVE
BEEN ATTACKED BY TROGG
AND RESCUED AT THE LAST
MOMENT BY BLUE DAHLIA,
BOTH OF WHOM ABRUPTLY
DISAPPEARED.

WRST CONTACTED
ACTRESS LYNDY JULIANNE,
WHO PORTRAYED BLUE
DAHLIA IN THE EIGHTIES
TV SERIES, AND ASKED
FOR HER COMMENT...

FAITH

2

*I am forgotten as a dead
man out of mind...*
Psalms 31:12

DO NOT BE
AFRAID, MY
FRIENDS.

YOU
ARE SAFE
NOW.

ALL ARE
WELCOME
HERE.



UHHH...
UHH...

AND WHO
MIGHT YOU
BE?

HE MIGHT
BE THE ARCH-
ANGEL
GABRIEL...

...BUT
HE
AIN'T.

MATTHEW...
HUSH NOW,
THE LADY HAS
ASKED A PROPER
QUESTION.

I AM
FATHER
MICHAEL
BENEDICT.

AND
YOU
ARE...?

MURCHESON,
TONY MURCHESON,
AND THESE...

...ARE THE
NEXT MEN,
YES.

OUR SITUATION
HERE IS PRIMITIVE
TO BE SURE, BUT NOT
ENTIRELY ISO-
LATED.

JACK...
WHAT HAVE YOU
DONE WITH
JACK?

HE IS SAFE,
AND NOT FAR FROM
HERE. COME, WE
WILL MAKE YOU
COMFORTABLE.

MATTHEW, YOU
AND THREE OTHERS
DO WHAT YOU CAN TO
SEAL THIS RATHER...
SPONTANEOUS
ENTRANCE.

"WE MUST DO WHAT WE
CAN TO PRESERVE OUR
PRIVACY..."

THEY MUST
HAVE COME
THIS WAY.
EVERYTHING
ELSE LEADS
UP.

AND UP MEANS
PEOPLE--WHICH
THEY WOULD BE DO-
ING THEIR BEST TO
AVOID.

UH HUH.
AND LOOK
WHAT I
SEE...

WELL, WELL!
I GUESS WE
SHOULDN'T BE
SURPRISED.

WITH SOMEONE
ON THIS SIDE AS
STRONG AS THE
ONE THEY CALL
SHATTERMAN...

...IT WOULD
BE NO BIG DEAL
TO PUNCH A WAY
THROUGH INTO
THE SUBWAY TUNNELS
BELOW.

I WONDER...
IS THERE A FLASH-
LIGHT AROUND HERE
SOMEWHERE...?

WHAT...?

WALKER!

DONNA!

"WELL, IT MAY BE A
PUBLICITY STUNT..."

...BUT I
HAD NOTHING
TO DO WITH
IT.

BUT YOU MUST
ADMIT IT'S YOUR
STYLE, MR.
HOROWITZ.



AS THE BOSS
OF THE WHOLE DOLLAR
COMICS UNIVERSE, YOU'VE
ALWAYS BEEN SOMETHING
OF A MASTER AT SELF-
PROMOTION.

NOT
SELF PROMOTI-
TION.



AND I DID IT
ALL AS WORK FOR
HIRE, WHICH MEANT DOL-
LAR OWNED EVERYTHING I
DID.

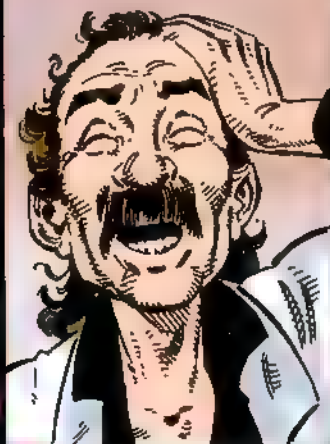
IT'S ALWAYS
BEEN THE
CHARACTERS
THAT I'VE HYPED.

THE BOOKS
AND THE
STORIES.

AND YET,
IT'S TRUE YOU
OWN NONE OF
THE CHARACTERS
YOU CREATED,
ISN'T IT?



OH, WE'RE NOT
GOING TO GET INTO
THAT ROUTINE AGAIN,
ARE WE?
LOOK, FOR WHAT
I HOPE WILL BE
THE LAST TIME, I CREATED
ACTION MAXX AND BLUE
DAHLIA AND VENTURA
AND DR. TROGG AND ALL
THE REST, YEAH.



BUT YOU KNOW
WHAT? BY THE TIME
I DID IT, COMPANIES
LIKE DOLLAR AND
MARVEL AND DC WERE
PAYING ROYALTIES TO THE
CREATIVE STAFF.

YEAH, I SOLD
OUT ALL THE RIGHTS
TO MY CREATIONS.
BUT I SURE AS HELL
DIDN'T SUFFER FOR IT.

YOU COULD MAKE
A DAMN GOOD CASE
THAT PEOPLE LIKE
KIRBY AND DITKO GOT
SCREWED--



--ALTHOUGH
THEY BOTH WENT
INTO IT WITH
THEIR EYES WIDE
OPEN--

--BUT THOSE OF
US WHO CAME
AFTER GOT A PRETTY
SWEET DEAL.

PEOPLE
LIKE BYRNE AND
CLAREMONT AND
MCFARLANE...

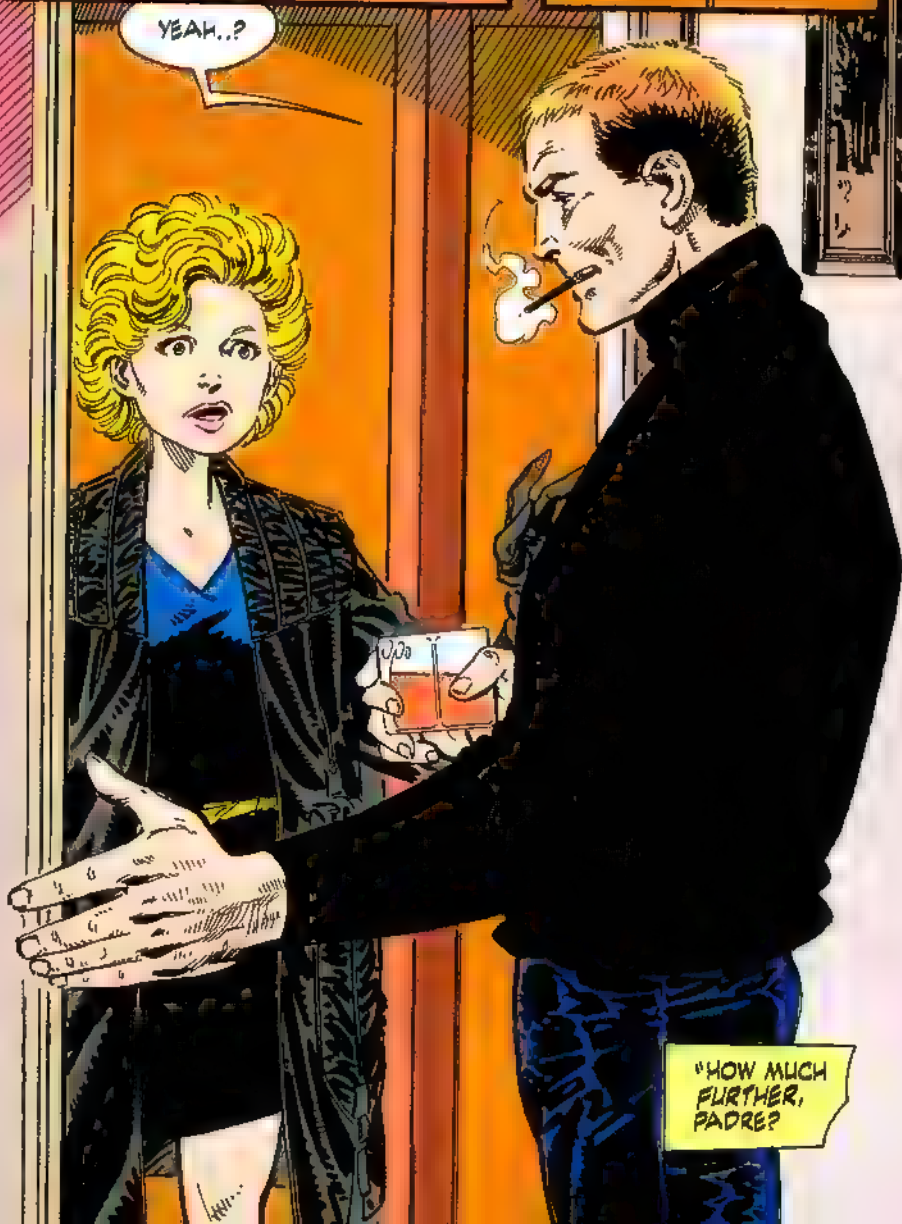


"...ALL DID REAL WELL
LONG BEFORE THEY WENT
INDEPENDENT."



GARRISON
CARTER
206 W. 53RD ST.
APT. 10 B

YEAH..?



"HOW MUCH
FURTHER,
PADRE?"



IN THIS DARKNESS,
WITHOUT LANDMARKS,
IT FEELS LIKE WE'VE
BEEN WALKING FOR
HOURS.

NOT FAR
NOW, MISS
MURCHESON.

THIS IS QUITE A SET-UP.
IT REMINDS ME A BIT OF
THE TUNNELS UNDER THE
NORTH END OF THE
GREENERY.



MMM. ONE DAY
YOU REALLY ARE
GOING TO HAVE TO
TELL ME ALL ABOUT
THAT PLACE.

LOOK!
THERE'S
LIGHT
AHEAD.

GOOD, WE
ARE ALMOST
HOME.

HALT!
WHO GOES
THERE?

IT'S ME,
ALAN.

FATHER MIKE...
THEN THERE WAS
A BREAK-IN?

I HAVE
BROUGHT US
SOME NEW
GUESTS.



YES, BUT
NOTHING TO
FEAR.

GO AHEAD
NOW, MY
FRIENDS.



"I THINK YOU WILL BE...
IMPRESSED BY WHAT YOU
FIND."

HOLY...!

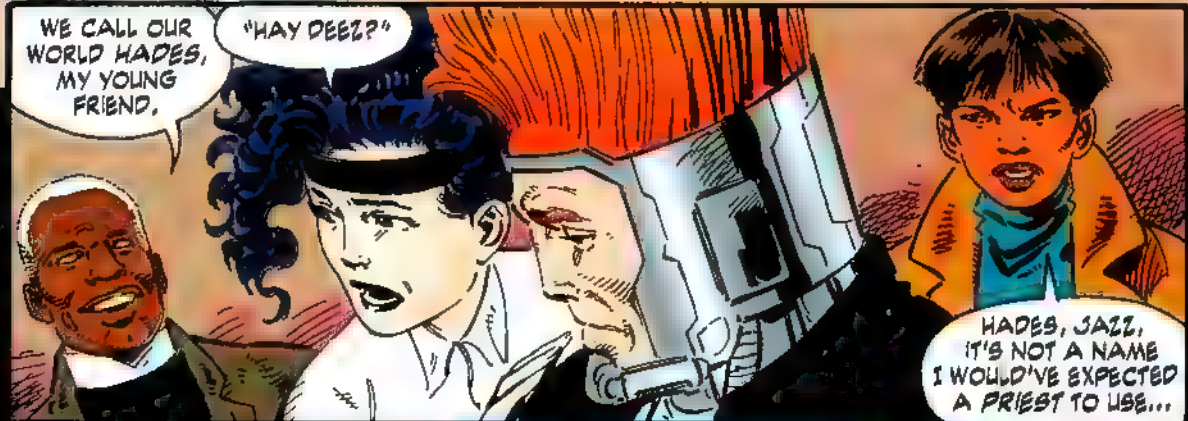
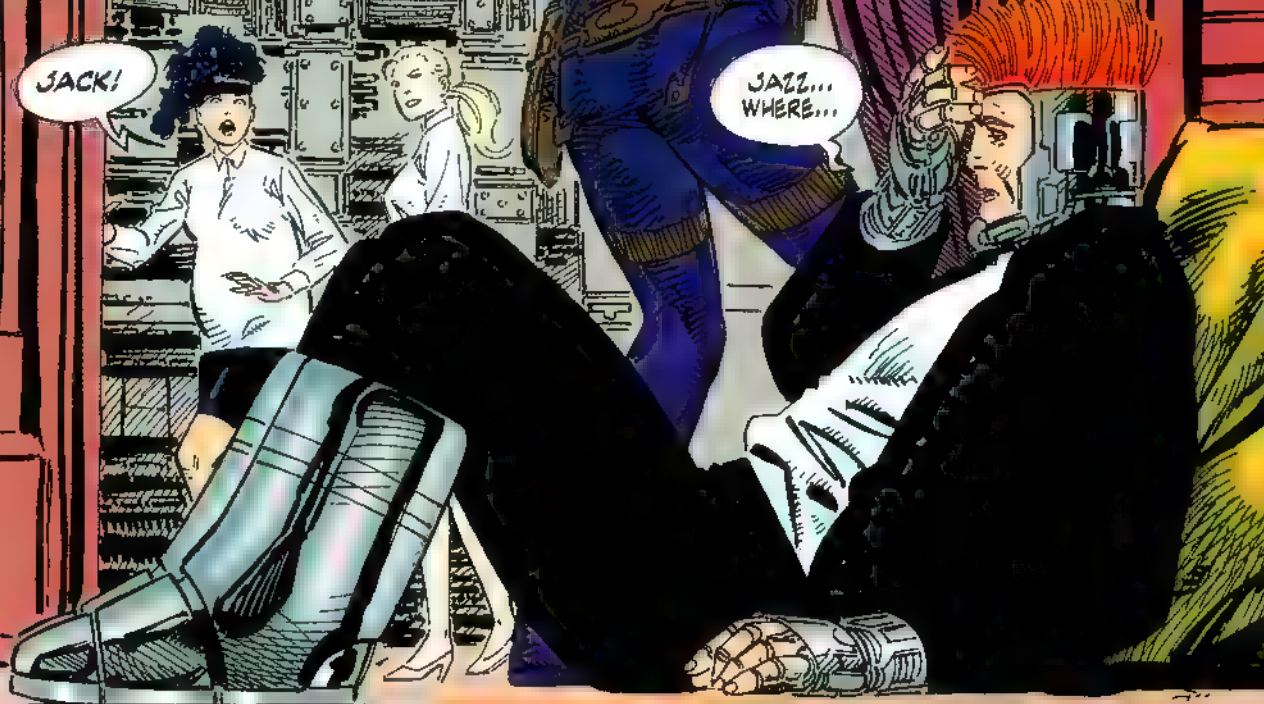
OVER TWO HUNDRED
AND FIFTY PEOPLE
LIVE HERE, MOSTLY
ORPHANS THE CITY CAN
NO LONGER CARE
FOR...

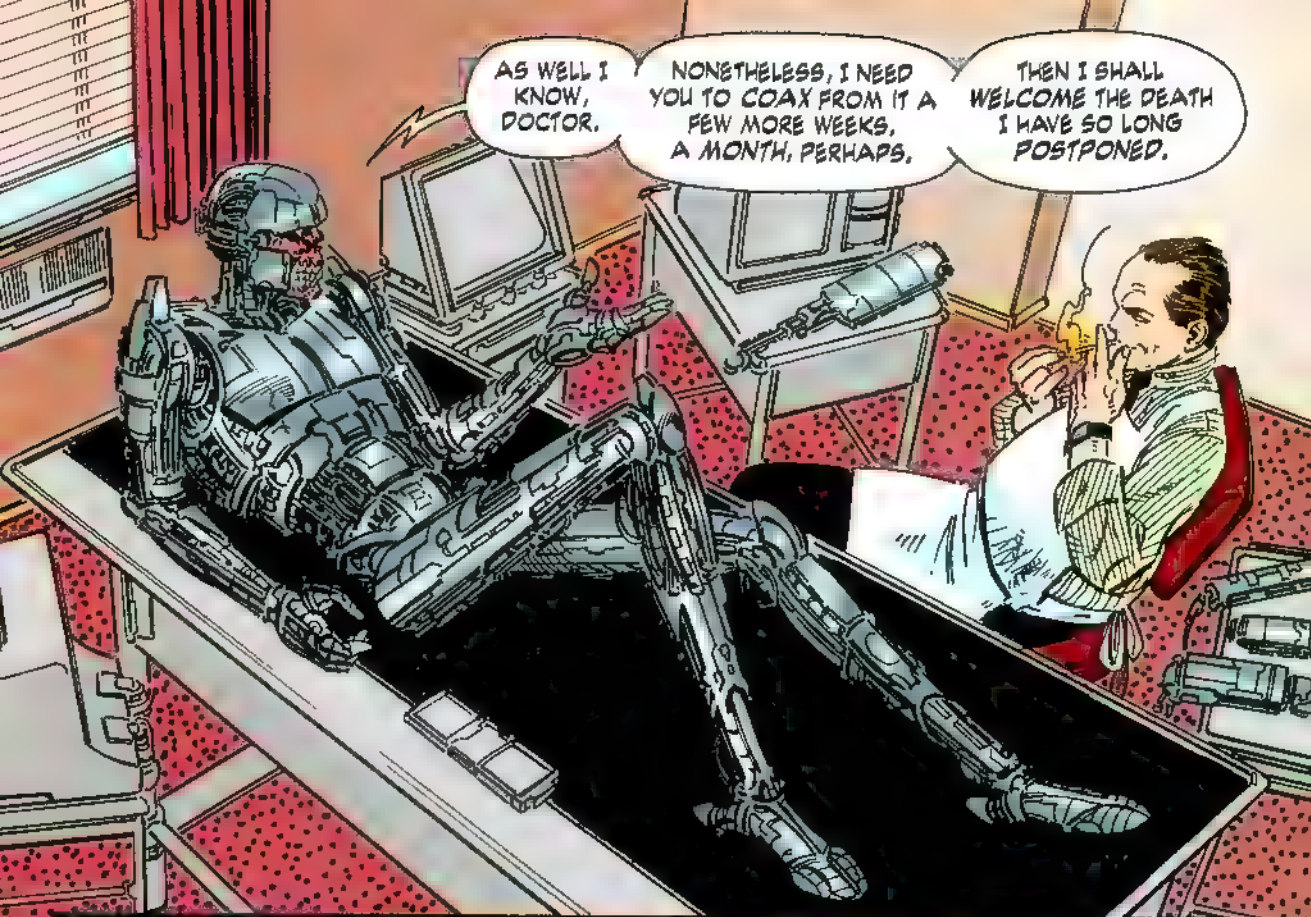
...THOUGH WE
ALSO HAVE ELEVEN
COMPLETE FAMILIES
WITH US.

FAMILIES?
WHY WOULD
FAMILIES LIVE
DOWN HERE?

THEY ARE VICTIMS
OF OUR FAILING SOCIAL
STRUCTURE. PEOPLE
WHO HAVE LOST THEIR
HOMES THROUGH
NO FAULT OF THEIR
OWN.

IT HAS BECOME
TOO EXPENSIVE TO
LIVE IN NEW YORK,
YET TOO EXPENSIVE
TO MOVE AWAY.





AS WELL I
KNOW,
DOCTOR.

NONETHELESS, I NEED
YOU TO COAX FROM IT A
FEW MORE WEEKS,
A MONTH, PERHAPS.

THEN I SHALL
WELCOME THE DEATH
I HAVE SO LONG
POSTPONED.

I DON'T SUPPOSE
YOU'RE INTERESTED IN
TELLING ME ANYTHING
MORE THAN THAT?



WHEN I WAS FIRST
BROUGHT HERE YOU
MADE SOME REMARK
ABOUT BEING OVER
TWO HUNDRED YEARS
OLD.

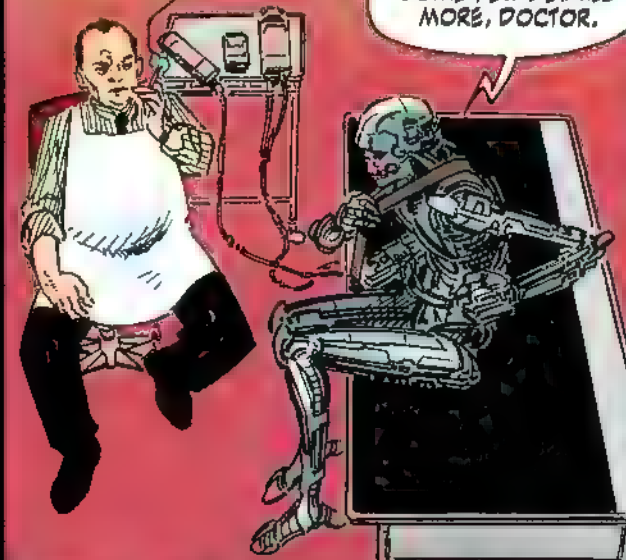
BUT THIS MECHANISM
OF YOURS WAS NEVER
BUILT IN THE 1700S.
THAT'S JUST FLAT OUT
IMPOSSIBLE.

QUITE
SO, BUT MY
STATEMENT IS
TRUE.

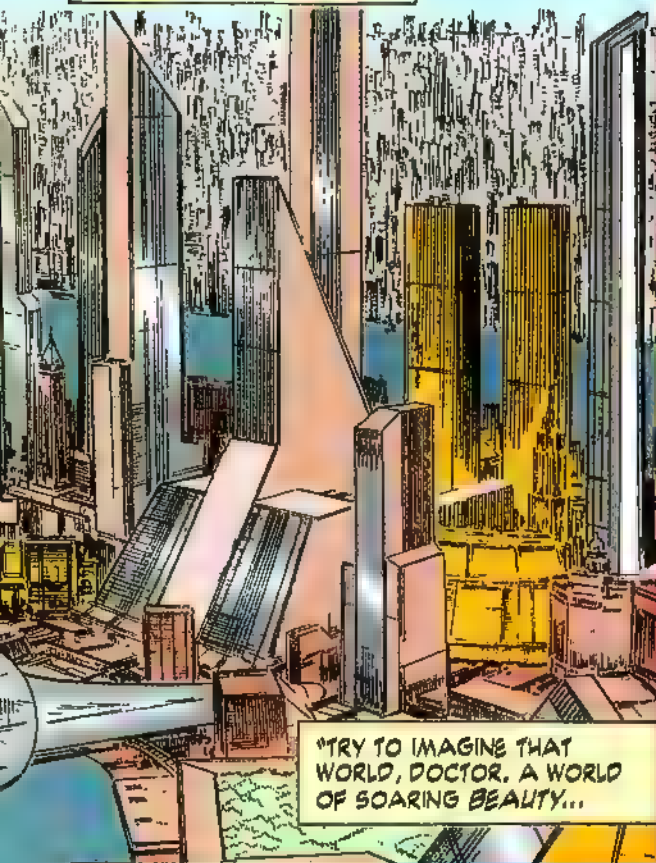
PERHAPS IT IS
TIME I TOLD YOU
SOME FEW DETAILS
MORE, DOCTOR.

BEAR WITH
ME, THOUGH. IT
IS A COMPLICATED
TALE. SO MUCH SO
I AM NOT QUITE CERTAIN
WHERE TO SAY IT
BEGINS.

FOR THE SAKE
OF DISCUSSION,
HOWEVER, LET US
SAY...



"...MY STORY BEGINS IN THE
CALENDAR YEAR 2112.



"TRY TO IMAGINE THAT
WORLD, DOCTOR. A WORLD
OF SOARING BEAUTY..."

"...SIDE BY SIDE WITH
SAVAGERY.



"AND THERE ARE THE
MUTATES--CALLED
HALFLINGS BY SOME.

"THEY ARE GENETICS
GONE MAD.

"AND THEY ARE FEARED
DOCTOR.

"FEARED AND
HATED--AND NOT WITHOUT
GOOD REASON.



"MANKIND HAS SEEN THE
FUTURE, DOCTOR. AND IT
IS US.

YES, I AM A
MUTATE, MADE SO BY
A MOMENTARY
INDISCRETION, A
WEAKNESS AT A TIME
WHEN I BELIEVED
MYSELF TO HAVE
ATTAINED THE
ULTIMATE POWER.
IT IS MY CURSE TO
DERIVE SUSTENANCE
FROM THE LIFEFORCE
OF OTHERS.



"BUT IT IS A CURSE WHICH I
HAVE LEARNED TO ENJOY."



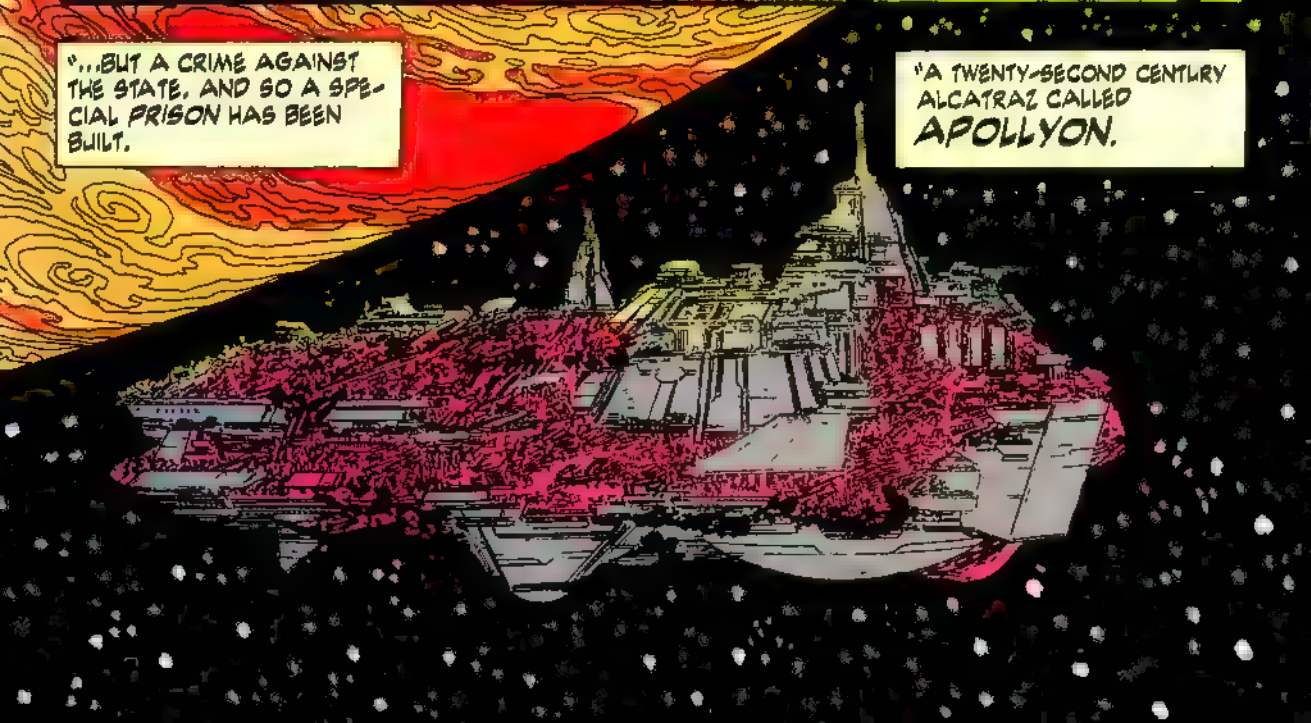
"ALL MY HALFING HORDES
HAVE LEARNED THIS,
DOCTOR.

"AND SO WE HAVE BEEN
MADE ILLEGAL, OUR VERY
EXISTENCE DEEMED NOT
MERELY A CRIME AGAINST
NATURE...



"...BUT A CRIME AGAINST
THE STATE, AND SO A SPE-
CIAL PRISON HAS BEEN
BUILT.

"A TWENTY-SECOND CENTURY
ALCATRAZ CALLED
APOLLYON.



"AND UPON THAT ROCK DID I FOUND MY CHURCH, DOCTOR.

"THE CHURCH OF SATHANAS.



"NOT LONG AFTER I WAS INTERRED, I SEIZED CONTROL OF APOLLYON.

"BY THE TIME I WAS DONE, I WOULD HAVE CHANGED THE WORLD INTO A PLACE IN WHICH NONE BUT MY LOYAL HALFLINGS COULD SURVIVE.



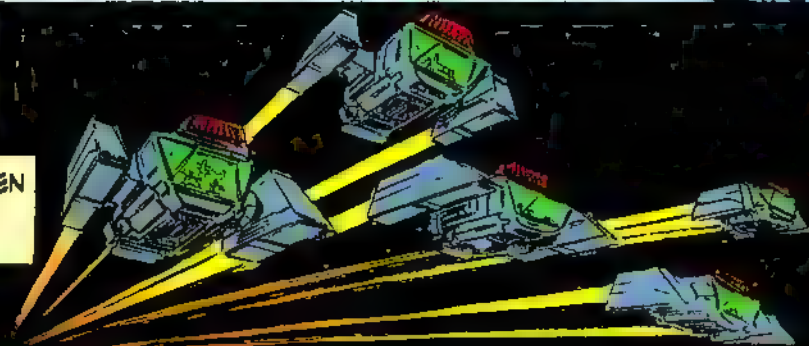
"THIS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED FIRST THROUGH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GREAT MACHINE WHICH SQUATTED ATOP THE SOUTH POLE...

"...GENERATING OZONE TO REPLACE THE NATURAL SUPPLY HUMANKIND HAD SO FOOLISHLY DEPLETED.

"BUT I WAS BETRAYED. DETAILS OF MY PLAN WERE EXTRACTED FROM A CAPTURED COHORT.

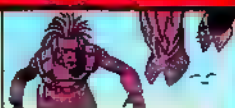
"WE WERE ATTACKED, EVEN AS THE MOMENT OF OUR VICTORY APPROACHED,

"WE WERE CAPTURED.



"BUT I HAD PROMISED MY HALFLINGS THEY WOULD NEVER BE RETURNED ALIVE TO APOLLYON,

"AS I FACED MY GREATEST FOE..."



"...I TRIGGERED AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE CONCEALED IN MY EXOSKELETON.



"FOCUSED AND COMPRESSED AS IT WAS BY THE CONTAINMENT FIELD MY ENEMIES HAD PLACED AROUND US..."

"...THAT BLAST WAS SUFFICIENT TO RIP OPEN THE VERY FABRIC OF TIME ITSELF.

"WITH NEARLY EIGHTY LOYAL HALFLINGS AT MY SIDE, I FELL THROUGH TIME..."

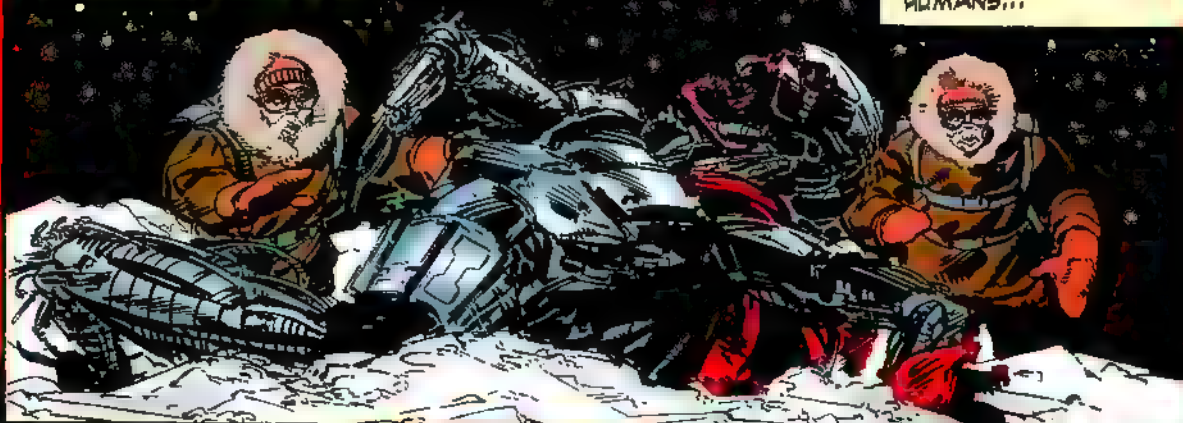


"...TO ARRIVE EXACTLY AT THE SPOT FROM WHICH WE HAD DEPARTED..."

"...BUT IN THE YEAR 1955!

"ONLY I SURVIVED, BUT TORN
AND BROKEN, NEAR DEATH."

"I WAS SAVED BY THE
ARRIVAL OF A TEAM OF
HUMANS..."



"AND ONE HUMAN IN
PARTICULAR, AN OLD
FRIEND, WHO DID
NOT-- COULD NOT
RECOGNIZE ME AS I WAS."

WAIT A MINUTE,
SATHANAS! YOU'VE
LOST ME, YOU SAY
YOU COME FROM THE
FUTURE?

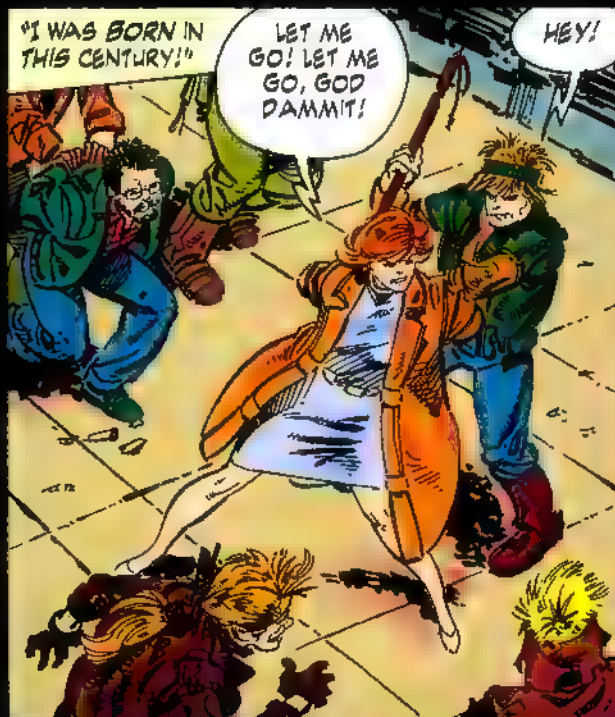
EVEN IF I
BELIEVED THAT,
HOW COULD YOU
MEET AN "OLD
FRIEND" IN 1955?

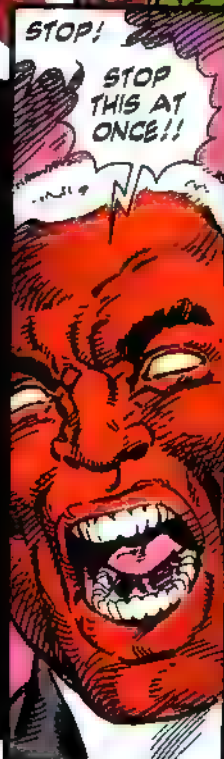
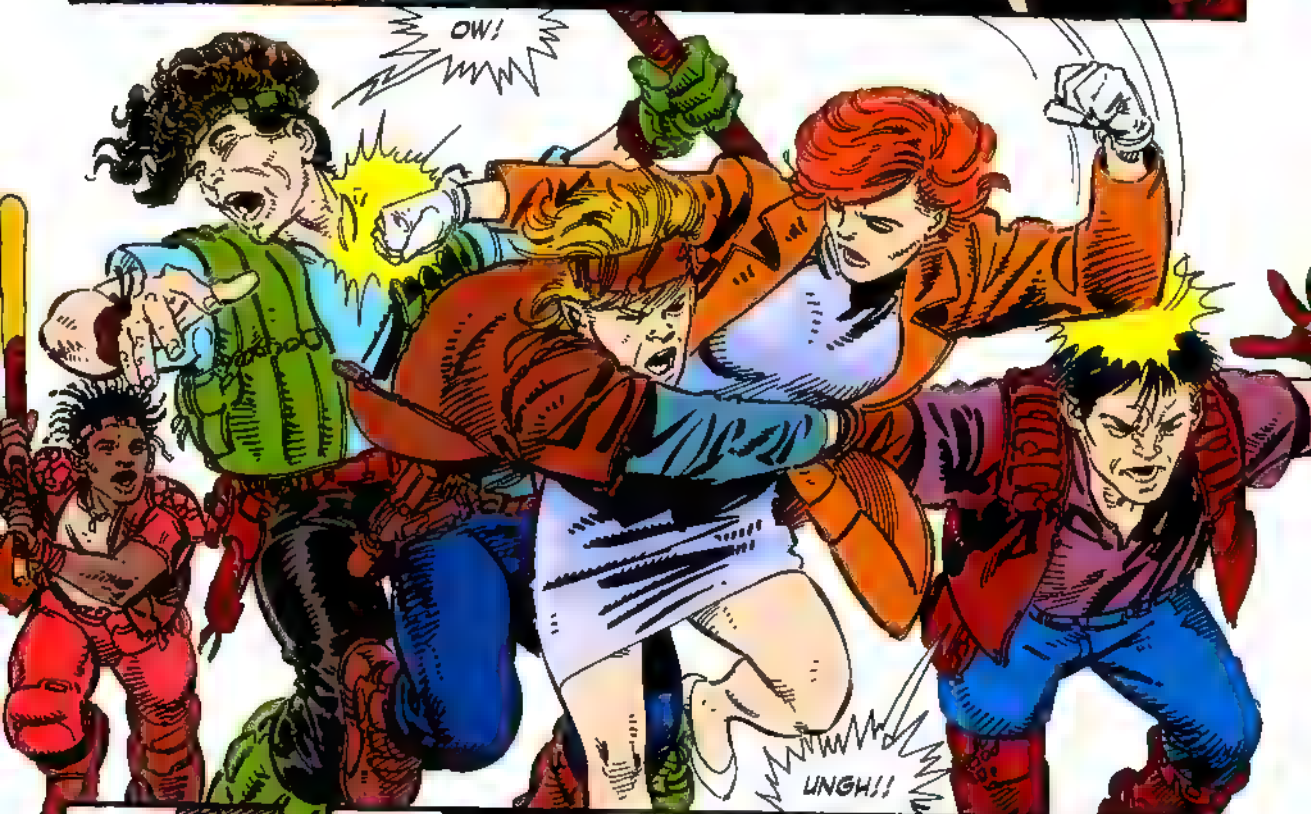


YOU WOULDN'T
EVEN HAVE BEEN
BORN YET!

ON THE
CONTRARY,
DOCTOR.









WE WERE PULLED DOWN, YOU MEAN, BUT--WHEN YOU SAY "OTHERS..." DOES THAT MEAN THE NEXT MEN CAME THIS WAY?

IT DOES.

CARE TO TELL ME WHY THAT'S ANY CONCERN OF YOURS?

I'M WALKER STONE, THIS IS DONNA WOJCIECHOWSKI.

WE'RE... REPORTERS FOR THE CHICAGO ADVOCATE.

YOU'RE A LONG WAY OFF YOUR BEAT, STONE.

WHY THE INTEREST IN THE NEXT MEN?

IT'S A STORY OF NATIONAL INTEREST, BESIDES...



"...WE'VE MET MUTATES LIKE THEM BEFORE."

OKAY... MAKE WITH THE EXPLANATIONS.

AS FAR AS WE KNOW THESE KIDS ARE THE ONLY SURVIVORS OF PROJECT NEXT MEN.

I'M SURE THEY ARE. THE MUTATES WE WENT UP AGAINST WEREN'T FROM ANY GOVERNMENT PROJECT.

MAYBE YOU READ ABOUT IT IN THE PAPERS?



"IT ALL STARTED WITH A BOY NAMED PAUL TRAYNE..."

THAT'S QUITE A STORY, MS. TOLLIVER.

AND IT'S TRUE. EVERY WORD OF IT.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU THIS MORNING WAS SOMETHING I DREAMED.

UH HUH.

YOU KNOW... I WOULDN'T BELIEVE EVEN A SINGLE WORD OF THIS...

I WAS THE BLUE DAHLIA WHO CAME FLYING TO YOUR RESCUE.

...IF I HADN'T SPENT ALL DAY WITH PEOPLE DIS-BELIEVING MY STORY.

OH, I BELIEVE YOU, ALL RIGHT, WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

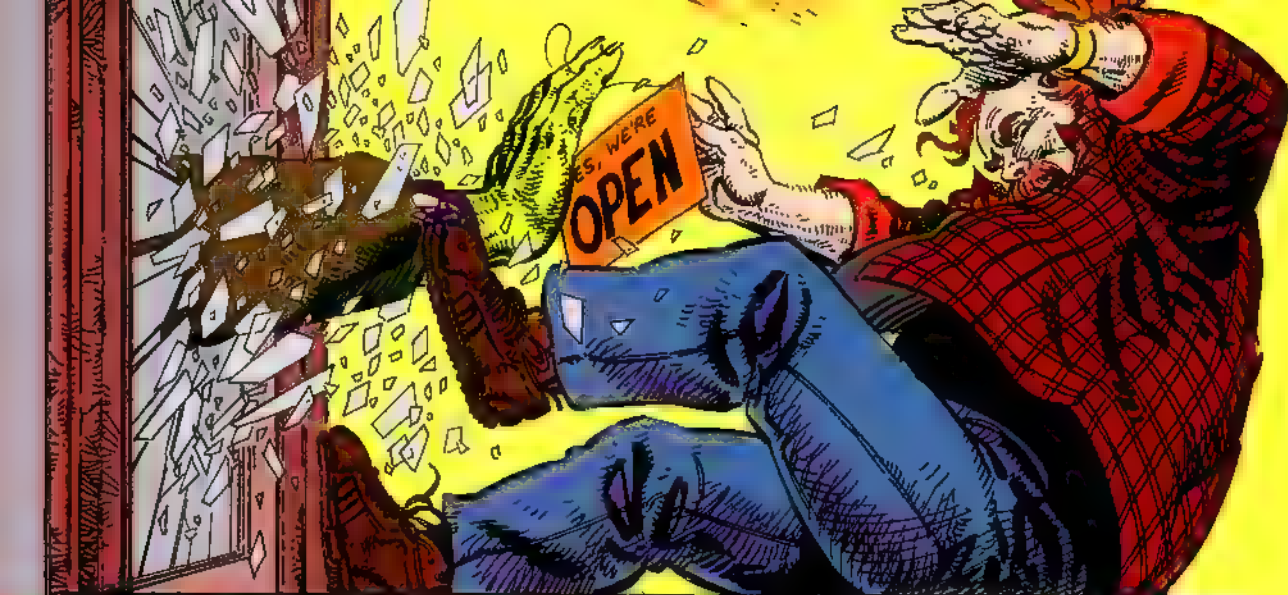
I'M INCLINED TO TAKE YOU AT YOUR WORD JUST BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE ME.

"...IS HOW DR. TROGG COULD HAVE BEEN REAL."

WARRR!

DO NOT CROSS
THE LINE
PLEASE

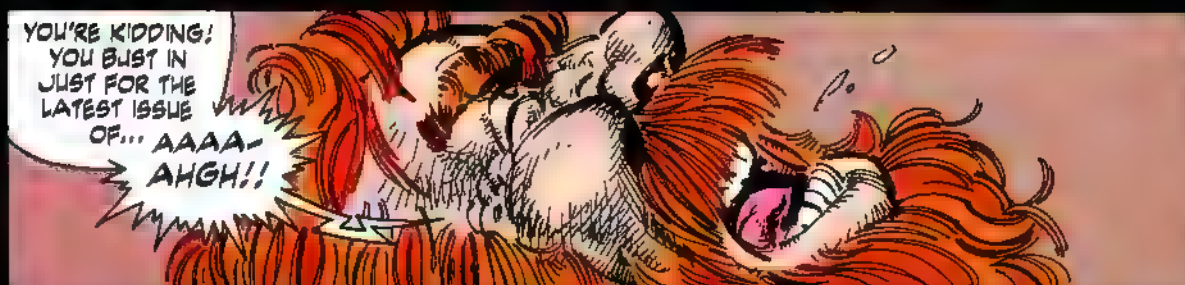
50% 40% 20% 20% 10%



WHAT
TH'...??

SILENCE,
SPEAK ONLY
WHEN I
COMMAND.

NOW... YOU
HAVE "COMIC
BOOKS" ABOUT
ACTION
MAXX..?



YOU'RE KIDDING!
YOU BUST IN
JUST FOR THE
LATEST ISSUE
OF... AAAA-
AHGH!!



ACTION MAXX,
WHERE ARE THE
COMIC BOOKS
ABOUT ACTION
MAXX?

TH-THERE!
OVER ON THE
RACK BETWEEN
ACTION COMICS
AN' ADVENTURES
OF SUPERMAN!!



THEN IT IS
TRUE.

SOMEHOW, IN
THIS WORLD, I
AM A CREATURE
OF SOME WRITER'S
IMAGINATION.



HOW
CAN THIS
BE??

I DON'T
KNOW! PLEASE,
MISTER! I JUST
RUN THIS SHOP,
OKAY?

I DON'T
EVEN CARE
ABOUT COMIC
BOOKS!



THEN YOU
WILL TAKE ME
TO SOMEONE
WHO DOES.

SOMEONE
TO EXPLAIN
WHAT HAS HAP-
PENED TO ME...



"...AND TELL ME WHO I
MUST PUNISH!"

THAT'S
INCREDIBLE! SOME-
ONE WHO WAS
TRIGGERED
NATURALLY!

AND YET... IF WHAT
LITTLE WE KNOW IS
TRUE, IT ONLY MAKES
SENSE.

ACCORDING TO THE NOTES DR. BREMMER LEAKED TO US, THE TRIGGER GENE IS THE BASIC MECHANISM OF HUMAN EVOLUTION. IT'S IN ALL OF US.

WHAT PROJECT NEXT MEN DID WAS FIND A WAY TO ACTIVATE THE GENE ARTIFICIALLY.



"AND THAT'S WHEN THE TROUBLE STARTED..."

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MY SON? YOU WERE NOT HURT BY YOUR FALL...?

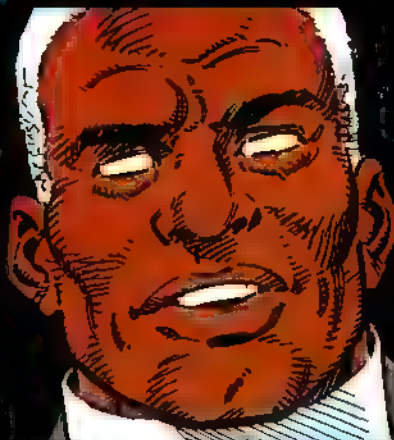
NO, SIR. IT'S NOTHING... PHYSICAL, I'M... TROUBLED.



SO MANY OF US ARE. ALL THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE HAVE BEEN ABANDONED BY THE WORLD.

THAT IS WHY WE THINK OF THIS AS A PLACE OF THE DEAD.

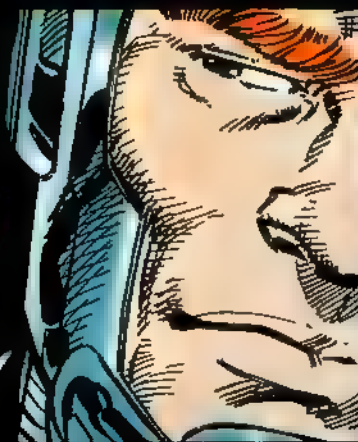
BUT, TELL ME... WHAT IS IT THAT TROUBLES YOU, JACK?



I'M A MURDERER, SIR. I KILLED A MAN. AND I DIDN'T THINK TWICE ABOUT IT, BECAUSE NO ONE, NOTHING EVER TOLD ME IT WAS WRONG.



BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT NOW. AND I'M TROUBLED BECAUSE MY FRIENDS WON'T LET ME STAND UP LIKE A MAN AND TAKE MY PUNISHMENT.



PERHAPS PUNISH-
MENT IS NOT WHAT
GOD INTENDS FOR
YOU, JACK.

GOD?
WHO'S
HE?

YOU... DON'T
KNOW? YOU ARE WRACKED
WITH GUILT OVER HAVING
KILLED, AND YET YOU DO
NOT KNOW GOD?

YOURS MUST BE
A MOST SPECIAL
SOUL, JACK. TELL
ME, CAN YOU READ
ENGLISH?

YES,
SIR.

THEN HERE,
READ THIS
BOOK.

IN IT YOU WILL
FIND THE
ANSWERS YOU
SEEK. THAT MUCH
I CAN PROMISE
YOU.

IN IT YOU WILL
FIND WORDS
THAT WILL FOREVER
CHANGE YOUR
LIFE.

FAITH

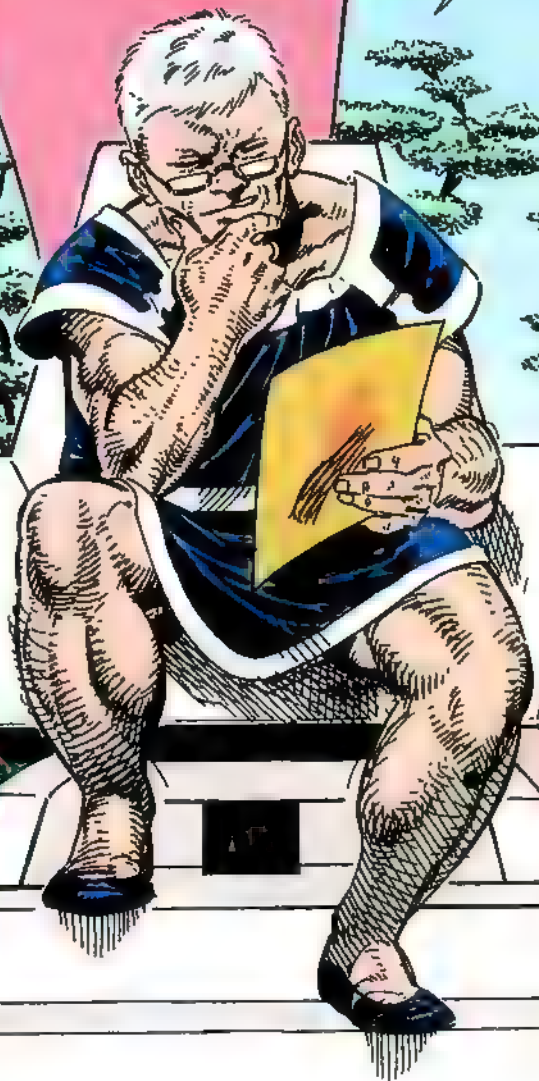
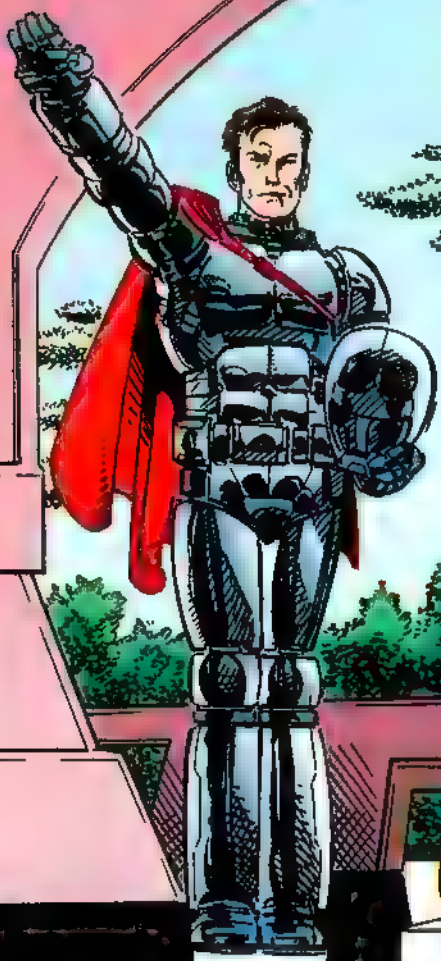
3

Such evil deeds could
religion prompt.
Lucretius
99 - 55 BC

HAIL CAESAR!
YOU SENT FOR
ME, YOUR
EXCELLENCY?

HAIL CAESAR,
YES, TRIBUNE SEPTIMUS,
TELL ME ABOUT THIS
PRISONER, JESUS OF
NAZARETH.

THESE DAMNED
PRIESTS WANT ME
TO EXECUTE HIM.



DO
THEY?

WELL, HE AIN'T
POPULAR WITH
THEM, I KNOW
THAT.

HE'S GOT QUITE
A FOLLOWING
AMONG THE
PEASANTS.

DOES HE,
INDEED? AND
WOULD YOU
CONSIDER HIM
DANGEROUS?

HA! THEY'RE
ALL DANGEROUS
IN THESE PARTS,
EXCELLENCY.

EVERY ONE OF
'EM WOULD SLIT
A ROMAN THROAT
IN A SECOND...

...IF THEY THOUGHT
THEY COULD ESCAPE
CRUCIFIXION.

YES, A
COWARDLY
BUNCH.

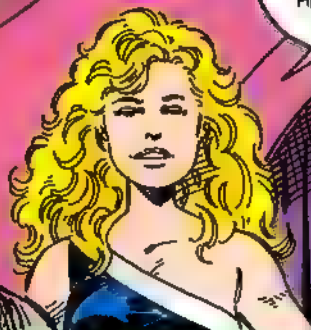
BUT THIS MAN
JESUS HAS ENOUGH
SPINE TO HAVE UP-
SET HIS JEWISH
MASTERS...

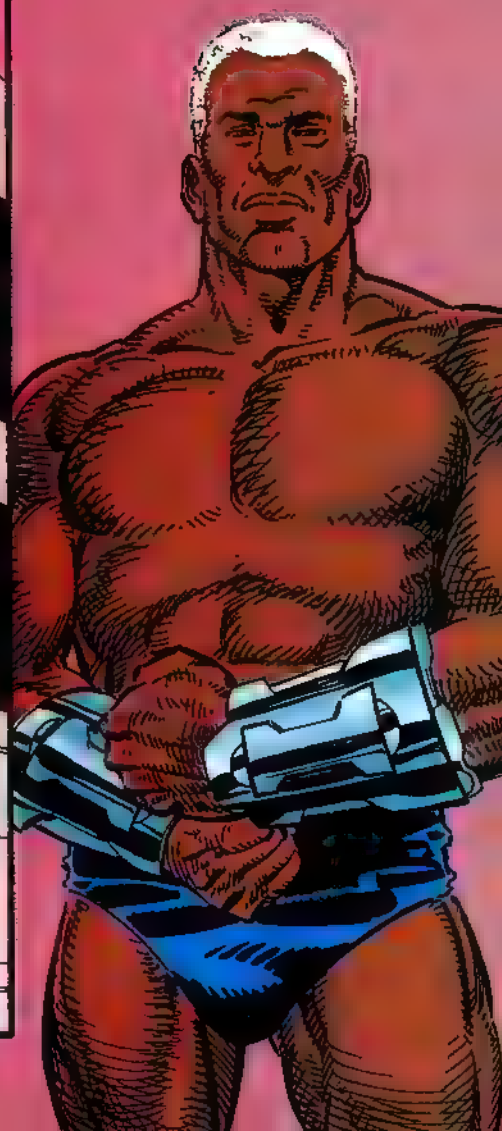
THEY ACCUSE
HIM OF BLASPHEMY,
BUT IF HE HAS A
FOLLOWING, AS YOU
SAY...



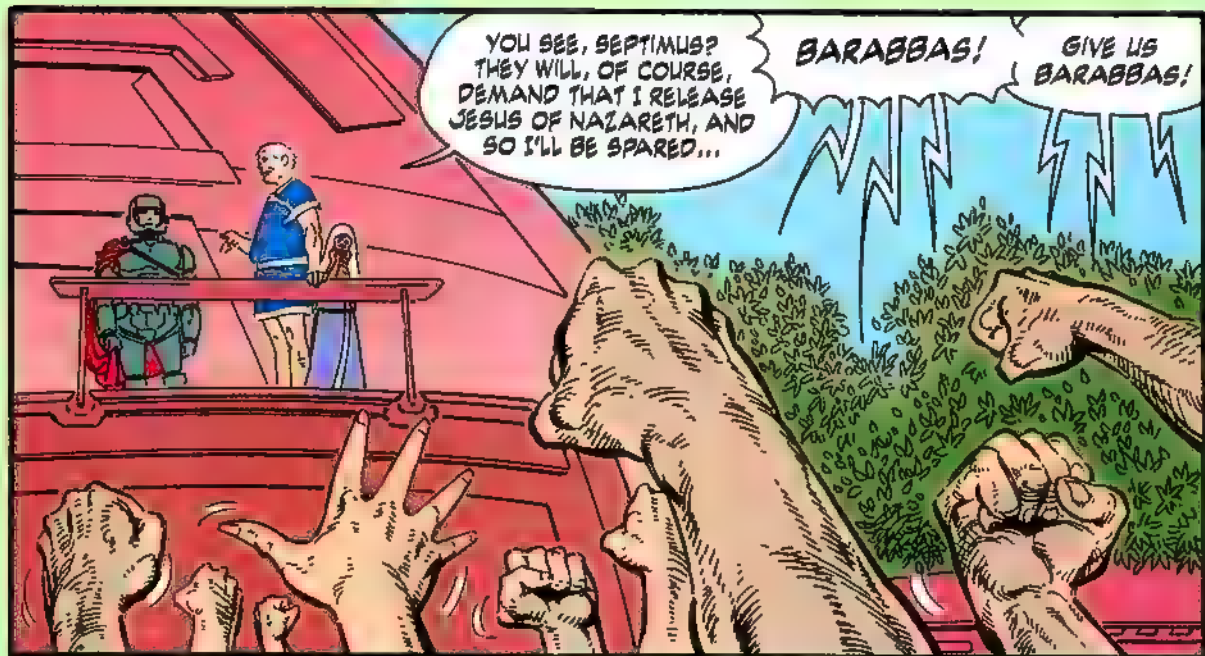
...IT MAY BE
THAT THEY'RE
JEALOUS OF HIS
POPULARITY...

EXCELLENCY,
THE PRIESTS ARE
HERE, WITH THE
PRISONER.









YOU SEE, SEPTIMUS?
THEY WILL, OF COURSE,
DEMAND THAT I RELEASE
JESUS OF NAZARETH, AND
SO I'LL BE SPARED...

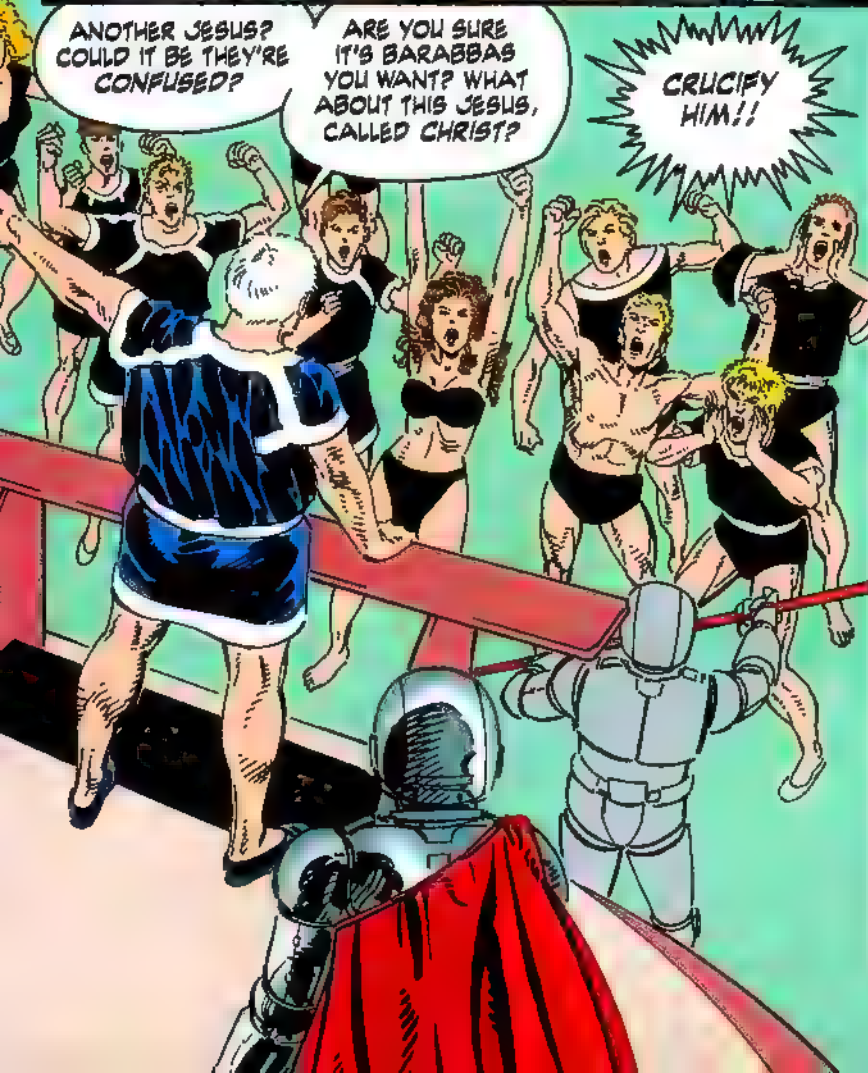
BARABBAS!

**GIVE US
BARABBAS!**



WHAT!?
DO WE HAVE A
PRISONER CALLED
BARABBAS?

YES, SIRE. JESUS
BARABBAS. WE PICKED
HIM UP DURING THE
REBELLION.



ANOTHER JESUS?
COULD IT BE THEY'RE
CONFUSED?

ARE YOU SURE
IT'S BARABBAS
YOU WANT? WHAT
ABOUT THIS JESUS,
CALLED CHRIST?

**CRUCIFY
HIM!!**



OKAY,
THEN, I WASH
MY HANDS OF
THE WHOLE
THING.

THE CHOICE
IS YOURS, HIS
BLOOD IS ON
YOUR HEADS.

"TAKE THE GALILEAN
AND CRUCIFY HIM."

FORGIVE THEM,
FATHER... FOR THEY
KNOW NOT WHAT
THEY DO...

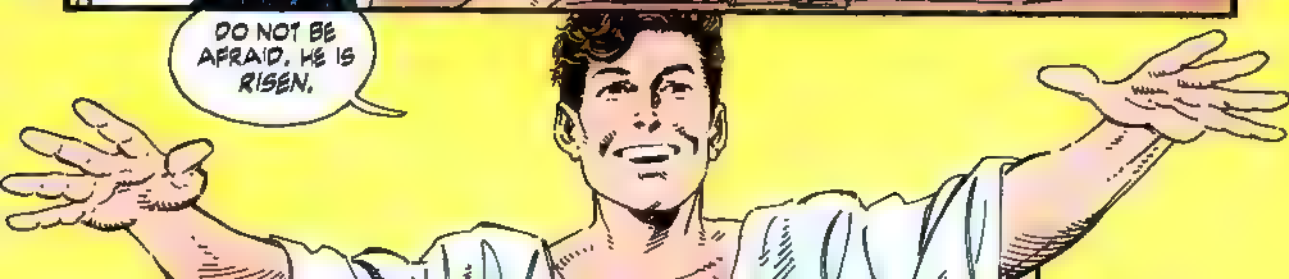
KING OF
THE JEWS

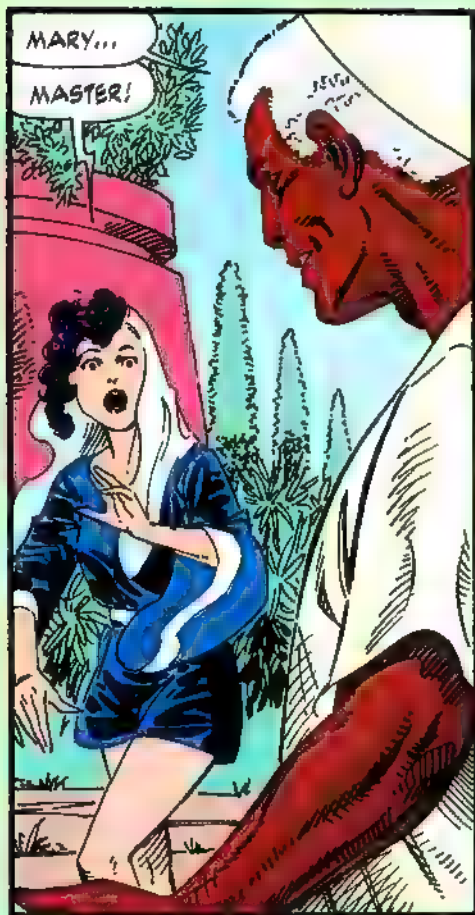


LOOK! THE
STONE HAS BEEN
ROLLED BACK FROM
HIS TOMB!

THERE'S
SOMEONE IN
THERE!

DO NOT BE
AFRAID. HE IS
RISEN.





MARY...
MASTER!



MASTER...
YOU'RE ALIVE.
HOW..?

IT'S AS I TOLD
YOU, AS WAS FORE-
TOLD IN HOLY
SCRIPTURE.

THE MESSIAH
WOULD BE PUT TO
DEATH, AND THEN
COME BACK.

NOW YOU'VE
SEEN THIS, AND YOU
HAVE TO CARRY
TO MANKIND MY
FATHER'S
MESSAGE.



SPREAD THE
NEWS TO ALL THE
CORNERS OF THE
WORLD. TEACH AS
I'VE TAUGHT
YOU,

AND
REMEM-
BER...

I AM
WITH YOU
ALWAYS.



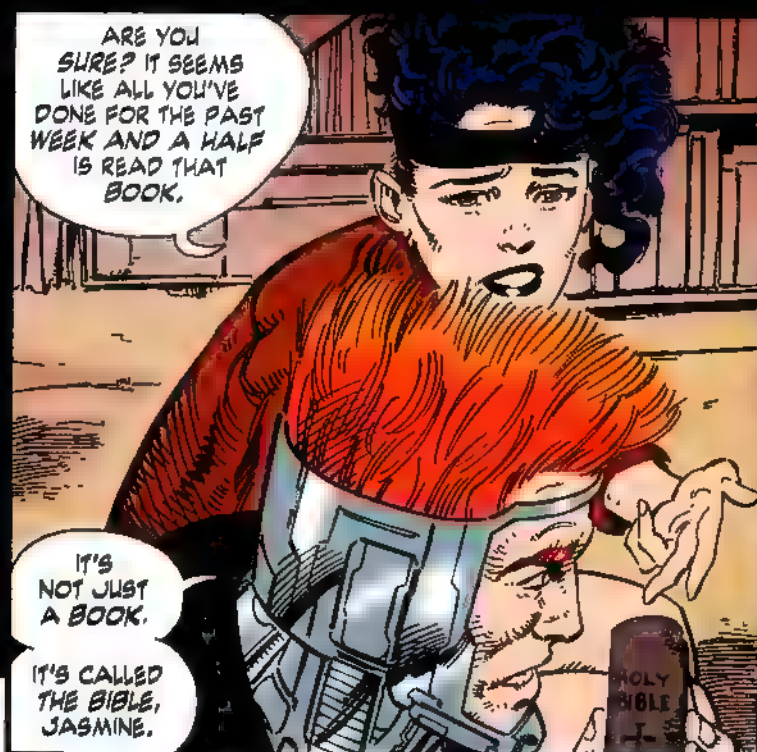
"EVEN TO THE END
OF THE WORLD."

JACK..?



JACK?
ARE YOU
OKAY?

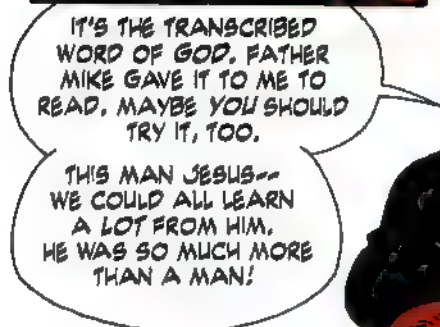
HMM?
OH, JASMINE.
YES, I'M
FINE.



ARE YOU
SURE? IT SEEMS
LIKE ALL YOU'VE
DONE FOR THE PAST
WEEK AND A HALF
IS READ THAT
BOOK.

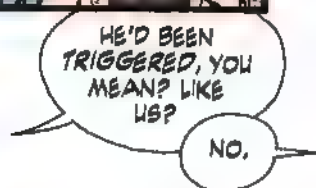
IT'S
NOT JUST
A BOOK.

IT'S CALLED
THE BIBLE,
JASMINE.



IT'S THE TRANSCRIBED
WORD OF GOD. FATHER
MIKE GAVE IT TO ME TO
READ. MAYBE YOU SHOULD
TRY IT, TOO.

THIS MAN JESUS--
WE COULD ALL LEARN
A LOT FROM HIM.
HE WAS SO MUCH MORE
THAN A MAN!



HE'D BEEN
TRIGGERED, YOU
MEAN? LIKE
US?

NO.



NO. HE WAS
NOTHING LIKE
YOU, JAZZ...

THERE'S
SO MUCH WE
WERE NEVER TOLD,
ABOUT GOD.

ABOUT HOW HE
MADE THE UNIVERSE,
AND SENT HIS ONLY
SON TO DIE FOR
OUR SINS!

JACK...

FATHER
MIKE!!



JOSHUA?
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT'S
WRONG?



SOMETHING'S
GOIN' ON, UP
ON TH' STREET,
FATHER.

HEAVY
TRAFFIC, BRIAN
THINKS MAYBE
MILITARY.



WHAT?
WHAT WAS
THAT?



IT'S THE POLICE
AGAIN. THEY'VE
FOUND US.



THAT'S NOT
POSSIBLE!
NOT IN ALL
THESE TUNNELS!



NO... OH
MY GOSH! IT
MIGHT BE POS-
SIBLE! IT
MIGHT!



DANNY...?
WHAT ARE
YOU SAYING?



DANNY!
WHY DIDN'T
YOU TELL
US?

I... I GUESS
I FORGOT. SO
MUCH HAPPENED
SINCE YOU CAME
BACK...

DON'T WORRY
ABOUT THAT
NOW. IF THIS IS TRUE,
THEN CONTROL WOULD
HAVE SEEN THIS PLACE,
AND THAT SIGN.

YOUR GLASSES, NATHAN.
WHILE YOU WERE IN RUSSIA
I FOUND OUT CONTROL HAS
SOME KIND OF SPY DE-
VICE IN YOUR GLASSES.

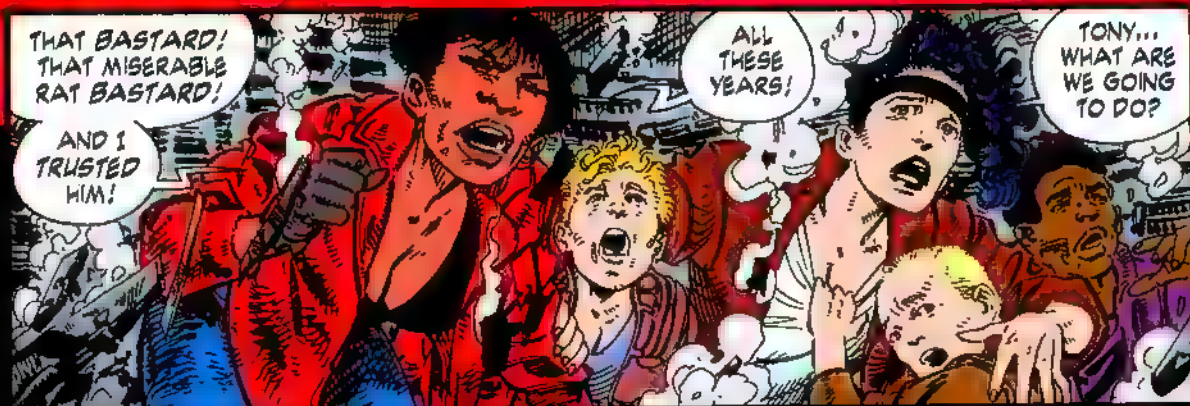
34

A close-up, high-contrast illustration of a man's face, rendered in a style reminiscent of comic book art. The man has dark, short hair and a serious, intense expression. His eyes are looking slightly to the right. A speech bubble is positioned in the upper left corner of the frame, containing the text "BUT... BUT CONTROL WOULD NEVER...". The background is a solid, light blue-grey color. The man's face is the central focus, with detailed shading on his features. The overall tone is dramatic and somber.

THEY'RE
ATTACKING
US!!

EVERYONE!
UNDER
COVER!!





THAT BASTARD!
THAT MISERABLE
RAT BASTARD!

AND I
TRUSTED
HIM!

ALL
THESE
YEARS!

TONY...
WHAT ARE
WE GOING
TO DO?

SPLIT UP.
DON'T GIVE THEM
A CONCENTRATED
TARGET.

EACH OF US
HAS GOT TO
LINK UP WITH ONE
OF THESE KIDS. THEY
KNOW THESE
TUNNELS.

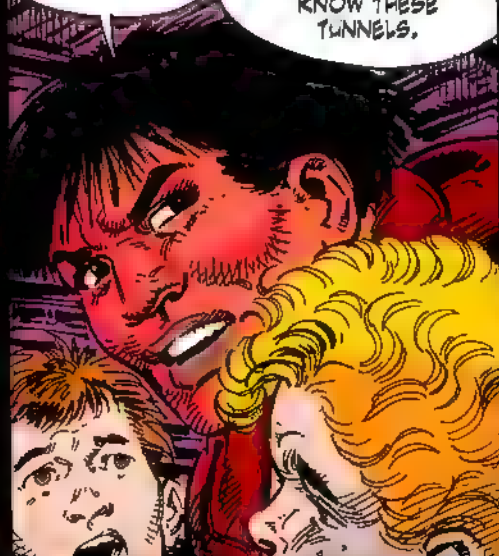
"THEY'RE OUR ONLY CHANCE
OF FINDING A WAY OUT."

DANNY!
NO! WE CAN'T
GO THAT
WAY.

IT'S TOO
DANGER-
OUS.

WHY?
WHAT'S
...?

WHAT
THE
HELL...?



DANNY..?

JOSHUA..?

WHERE
ARE
WE..?

I DON'T
RECOGNIZE
ANY OF
THIS...

TH- THESE
ARE THE OLD
TUNNELS,

THE ONES
FATHER MIKE
WARNED US
KIDS ABOUT.

THEY WERE
CLOSED DOWN
YEARS BEFORE THE
CITY SHUT DOWN
TH' REST OF THE
SUBWAY.



IT'S SO DARK, LIKE NOTHING I'VE EVER SEEN.

DO YOU KNOW A WAY OUT OF HERE?

I'M NOT SURE.

"IF THAT TUNNEL RUNS PARALLEL TO TH' ONE UP ABOVE..."

"...IT SHOULD LEAD UP-TOWN, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF THAT MEANS OUT..."



LISTEN!

THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING OUT THERE IN THE DARKNESS!

TH-THERE CAN'T BE.

FATHER MIKE SAYS THIS IS ALL TOO DANGEROUS FOR...



KIDS! HOLY SPIT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

RUN! RUN! GET AWAY!!

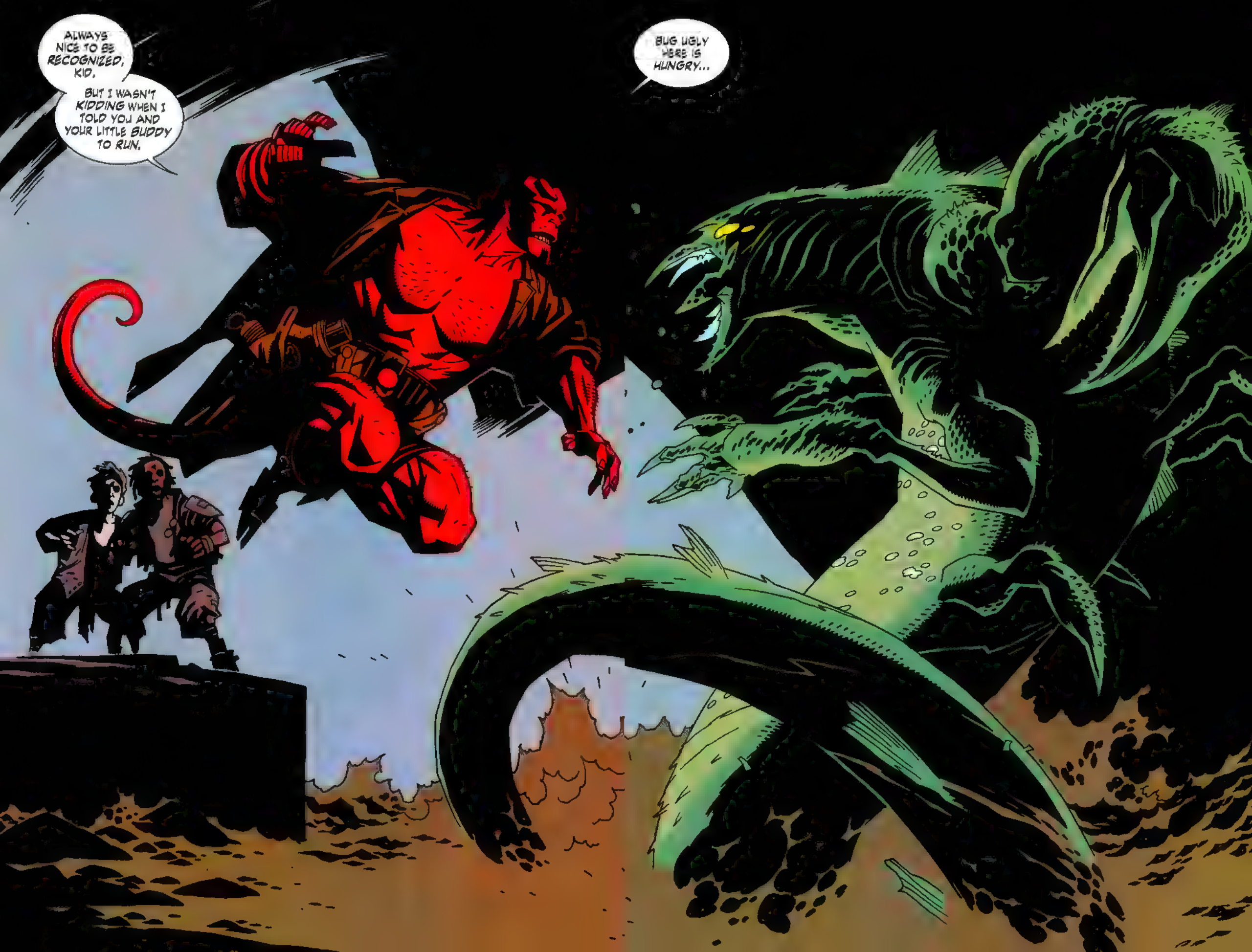
???

HELLBOY!!

ALWAYS
NICE TO BE
RECOGNIZED,
KID.

BUT I WASN'T
KIDDING WHEN I
TOLD YOU AND
YOUR LITTLE BUDDY
TO RUN.

BUG UGLY
HERE IS
HUNGRY...





...AND IF HE
MANAGES TO
HAVE ME AS HIS
MAIN COURSE...



"...HE'S GONNA WANT
YOU FOR DESSERT!"

JOSH! IT'S
HIM! IT'S REALLY
HELLBOY!

BUT...
BUT IT CAN'T
BE!!



"HELLBOY IS JUST A
COMIC BOOK
CHARACTER..."



"ISN'T
HE...?"

HUNHH...

HUNHH...

WELL, HE'S
DOWN FOR
THE COUNT.

BUT I CAN'T
HELP NOTICING
YOU KIDS ARE
STILL HERE.

W-WE
COULDN'T LEAVE.
NOT UNTIL WE
WERE SURE
YOU'RE REALLY
HELLBOY.

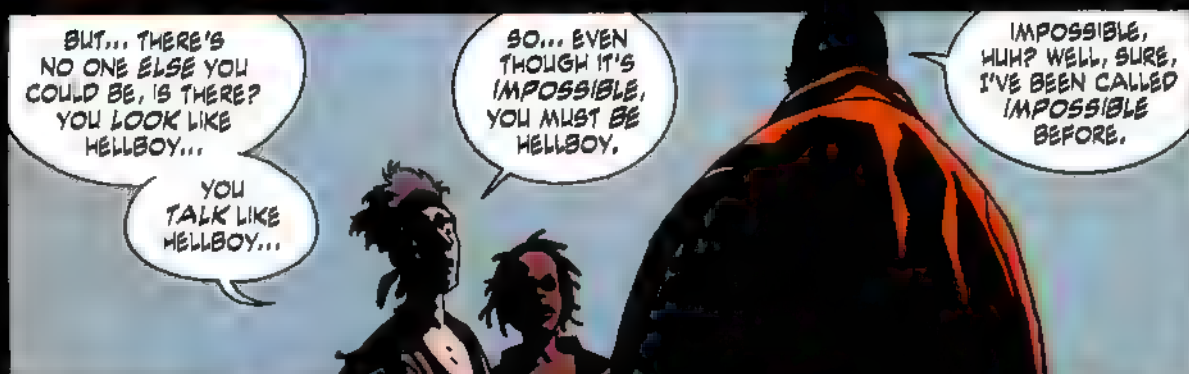


BUT... THERE'S
NO ONE ELSE YOU
COULD BE, IS THERE?
YOU LOOK LIKE
HELLBOY...

YOU
TALK LIKE
HELLBOY...

SO... EVEN
THOUGH IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE,
YOU MUST BE
HELLBOY.

IMPOSSIBLE,
HUH? WELL, SURE,
I'VE BEEN CALLED
IMPOSSIBLE
BEFORE.



AND TO BE
HONEST... I
FEEL A LITTLE
BIT IMPOSSIBLE
JUST NOW.

FUNNY... I WAS
SO CAUGHT UP IN
POUNDIN' THE BEJEZUZ
OUT OF THAT MONSTER
I KIND OF LOST TRACK
OF THE FACT THAT I'M
NOT SURE HOW I GOT
HERE.



OR...
EVEN WHERE
HERE IS,

IT'S LIKE...
LIKE NOTHING
EXISTED BEFORE
I CAME ROUND THAT
CORNER AND SAW
YOU KIDS.

I... DON'T
SUPPOSE YOU KNOW
A WAY OUT OF
HERE..?

MAYBE.



...BUT WE
GOTTA BE CARE-
FUL, YOU CAN
HEAR THE FIGHTING
STILL GOIN' ON UP
ABOVE.

YEAH, I WAS
KIND OF WONDER-
ING ABOUT THAT, I
THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE
THUNDER.

BUT IF THESE
REALLY ARE WHAT
THEY LOOK LIKE--
SUBWAY TUNNELS--
THE ONLY WAY WE
CAN GET OUT IS BY
GOING UP.

AND THAT
MEANS TOWARD
THE FIGHTING.

SURE, BUT
I'VE READ ALL
YOUR ADVENTURES,
HELLBOY. YOU'VE
NEVER RUN AWAY
FROM A FIGHT!

YOU COULD
HELP US
AGAINST THE
ATTACKERS.

I DON'T WANT
TO WRECK YOUR
OPINION OF ME--

--THOUGH I'D
LOVE TO KNOW
JUST WHERE YOU'VE
BEEN READING
ABOUT ME--

--BUT SINCE I
DON'T KNOW WHERE
I AM OR HOW I GOT
HERE, I THINK I'D BET-
TER LAY LOW FOR A
BIT.

JUST UNTIL
I GET MY
BEARINGS.

SPEAKING
OF WHICH...

...IT LOOKS
A LITTLE BIT
LIGHTER IN
THAT DIRECT-
ION...

YOU
WERE RIGHT,
HELLBOY.

BUT THIS
GATE IS
LOCKED.

NO, IT
ISN'T.

NOW, COME
ON... LET'S GET
UP TO THE SUR-
FACE.

IF THIS PLACE
AT LEAST LOOKS
LIKE THE NEW
YORK I'M FAMILIAR
WITH...

...KID..?

HELLBOY...

AHH...

...SHIT!



RUN
YOU KIDS!
RUN!!

BUT... WE
CAN'T JUST
LEAVE YOU!

YOU MIGHT
NEED OUR
HELP!



"WHAT CAN
WE DO?"

"WE'RE NOT EVEN
SURE ANY OF THIS
IS REAL."



"C'MON,
JOSHUA."

"HELLBOY'S OPENED
THE WAY TO THE STREET."



"IF WE CAN GET UP
THERE..."

"... MAYBE WE CAN SEND
SOMEBODY BACK TO HELP
HIM..."

DANNY!
HE'S GONE!
HELLBOY'S
GONE!
AND...
AND THE
MONSTER,
TOO!

SUT...
WHERE DID
THEY COME
FROM?



COME ON,
WE'RE ALMOST
TO THE STREET.

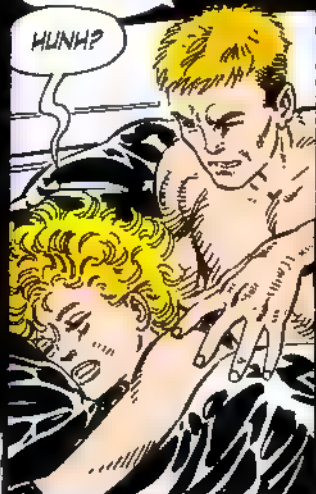
FROM THE
SOUND OF THINGS,
WE'RE ON THE
OUTER FRINGE OF
THE BATTLE ZONE.



"WE CAN WORRY ABOUT
WHERE HELLBOY CAME
FROM WHEN WE KNOW
WE'RE SAFE..."

SANDY?
BABE? ARE
YOU OKAY?

HUNH?



OH, I WAS...
DREAMING, I
DOZED OFF THINK-
ING ABOUT
DANNY...

WORRYING
THAT HE WAS
OKAY...

AND I
HAD THIS...
DREAM...



NOT LIKE THE
DREAM YOU HAD
WITH ME IN IT,
I HOPE!

WELL...
YEAH. IT SORT
OF WAS.

THERE WAS
DANNY AND
SOME LITTLE
KID...

...AND
HELLBOY!

JESUS,
HELLBOY WAS
IN IT! FIGHTING ONE
OF THOSE BIG
MONSTERS MIGNOLA
LOVES DRAWING SO
MUCH.

AND... AND
ALL THE TIME
THEY WERE ON
THE RUN, BE-
CAUSE...

TURN ON THE
TV, WOULD YOU,
BABE?

IF THIS WAS
EVEN HALFWAY
REAL...

...BATTLE ROYAL
WHICH IS UNFOLDING
EVEN NOW AT THE
ENTRANCE TO THE OLD
TWENTY-SEVENTH STREET
SUBWAY STATION.

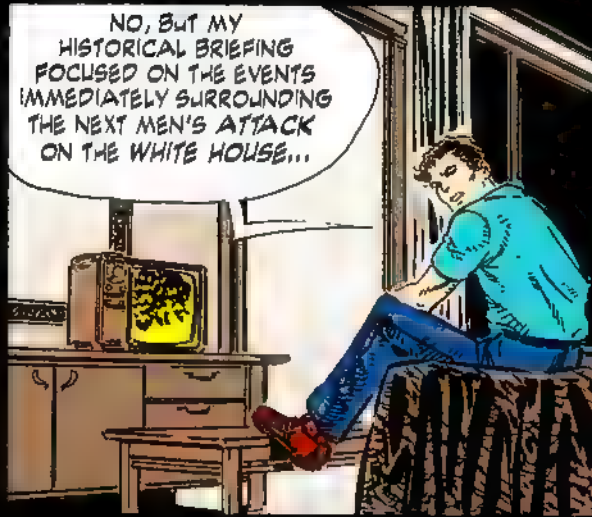
POLICE SOURCES
SAY THE RENEGADE
NEXT MEN HAVE
BEEN CORNERED BELOW
GROUND LEVEL, AND
EVEN NOW...

...COMBINED
ELEMENTS OF THE
NYPD, THE FBI, AND
THE NATIONAL GUARD
ARE PRESSING THEIR
ATTACK.



WE TAKE YOU
NOW LIVE TO
THE SCENE...

IS THIS PART
OF WHAT YOU
EXPECTED?



NO, BUT MY
HISTORICAL BRIEFING
FOCUSED ON THE EVENTS
IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDING
THE NEXT MEN'S ATTACK
ON THE WHITE HOUSE...



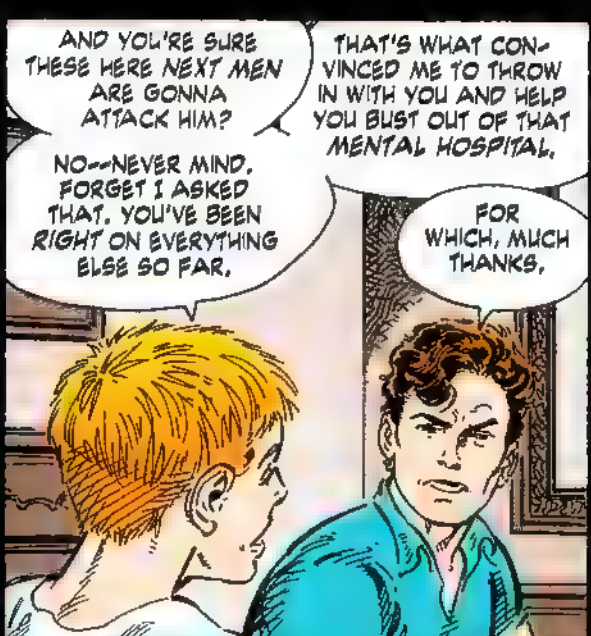
...AND THAT'S
SEVERAL WEEKS AWAY.
HM, SEEMS LIKE
YOU COULD HAVE
SAVED YOURSELF A
WHOLE PASSES OF
TROUBLE...



...IF YOU'D JUST
PLANTED YOURSELF
A MITE CLOSER TO
THE DATE YOU
NEED.

I WISH WE'D
HAD THAT OPTION.
AS IT IS, I ARRIVED
ALMOST TWO MONTHS
CLOSER THAN OUR
BEST ESTIMATE.

ALL THAT REMAINS
NOW IS TO GET TO
WASHINGTON IN
TIME TO SAVE
PRESIDENT HILLTOP.

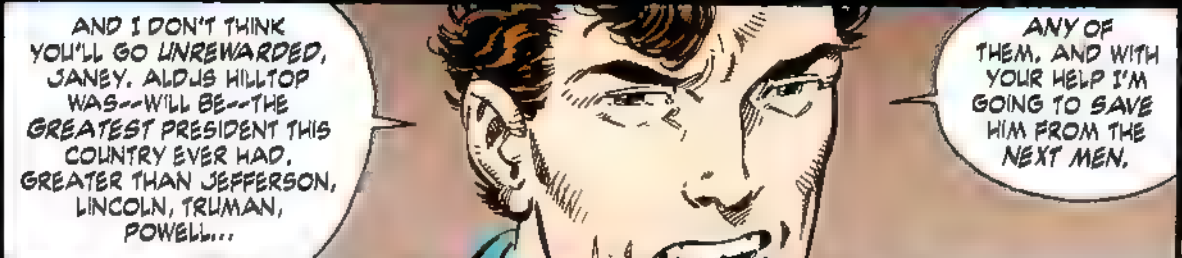


AND YOU'RE SURE
THESE HERE NEXT MEN
ARE GONNA
ATTACK HIM?

THAT'S WHAT CON-
VINCED ME TO THROW
IN WITH YOU AND HELP
YOU BUST OUT OF THAT
MENTAL HOSPITAL.

NO--NEVER MIND.
FORGET I ASKED
THAT. YOU'VE BEEN
RIGHT ON EVERYTHING
ELSE SO FAR.

FOR
WHICH, MUCH
THANKS.



AND I DON'T THINK
YOU'LL GO UNREWARDED,
JANEY. ALDUS HILLTOP
WAS--WILL BE--THE
GREATEST PRESIDENT THIS
COUNTRY EVER HAD.
GREATER THAN JEFFERSON,
LINCOLN, TRUMAN,
POWELL...

ANY OF
THEM. AND WITH
YOUR HELP I'M
GOING TO SAVE
HIM FROM THE
NEXT MEN.

FAITH

4

*...The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence
is drowned—*

William Butler Yeats
1865 - 1939







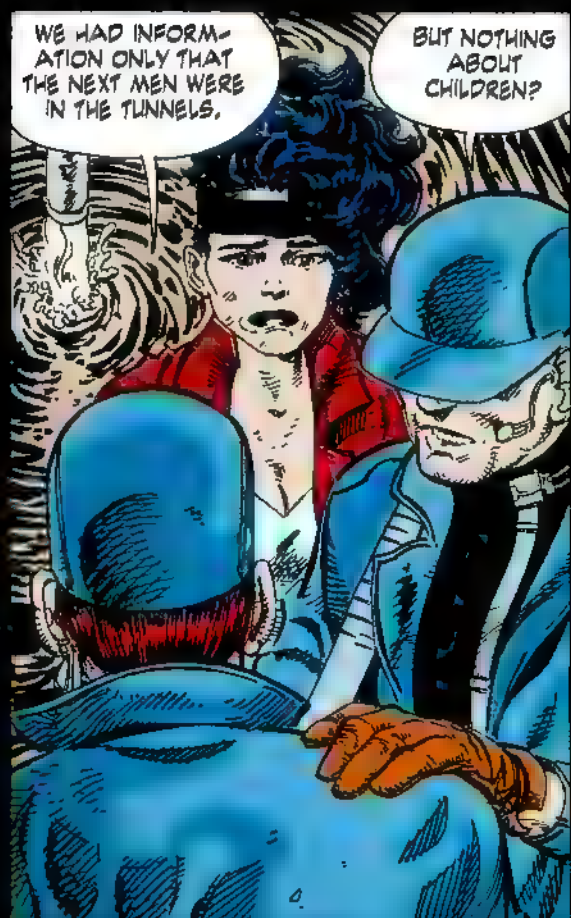




CONTROL...
WHAT'S HAPPEN-
ING?? THOSE MEN...
ATTACKING US,
ATTACKING THE
CHILDREN,

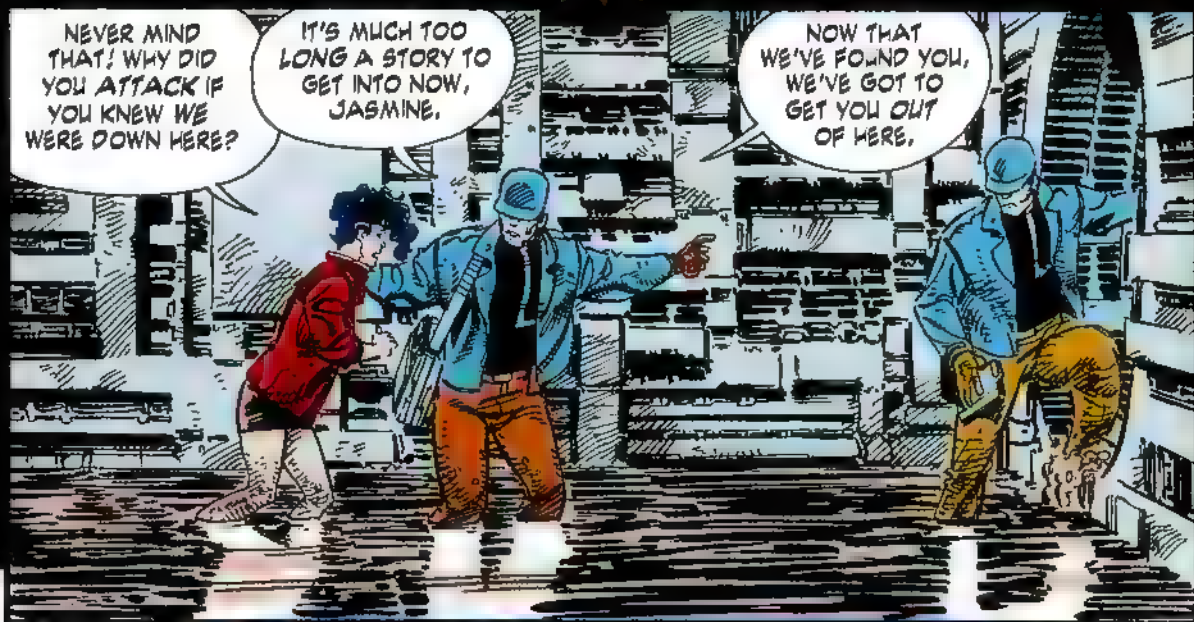
CHILDREN?
YOU KNOW
ABOUT THIS,
CONNORS?

NO,
SIR,



WE HAD INFORM-
ATION ONLY THAT
THE NEXT MEN WERE
IN THE TUNNELS,

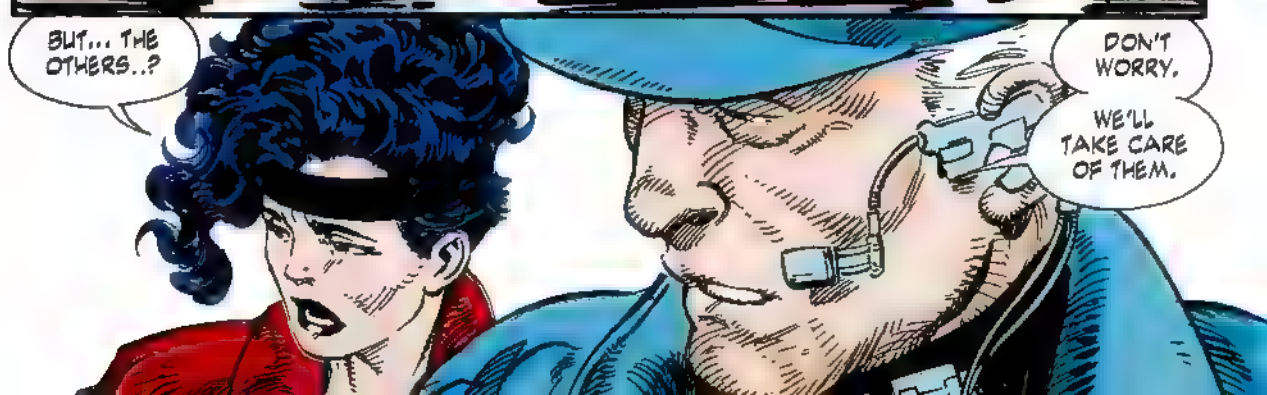
BUT NOTHING
ABOUT
CHILDREN?



NEVER MIND
THAT! WHY DID
YOU ATTACK IF
YOU KNEW WE
WERE DOWN HERE?

IT'S MUCH TOO
LONG A STORY TO
GET INTO NOW,
JASMINE,

NOW THAT
WE'VE FOUND YOU,
WE'VE GOT TO
GET YOU OUT
OF HERE,



BUT... THE
OTHERS..?

DON'T
WORRY.
WE'LL
TAKE CARE
OF THEM.

"JUST TRUST ME."

BETH!

TONY!

WHERE ARE
THE OTHERS?
HAVE YOU SEEN
THEM?

NO. THE WHOLE
MAIN TUNNEL
COLLAPSED UNDER
THE FIRST ASSAULT.

I THINK EVERY-
BODY GOT OUT,
BUT I HAVEN'T
SEEN ANYONE
BUT YOU.

I'M GOING
BACK AFTER
THEM.

BETH, NO!
THEY'RE STILL
BLASTING.

YOU
COULD...

WHAT?

I COULD BE
HURT...?

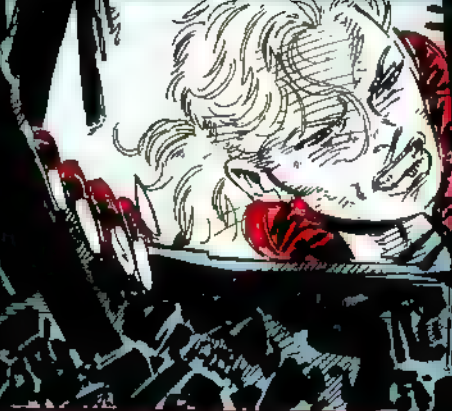
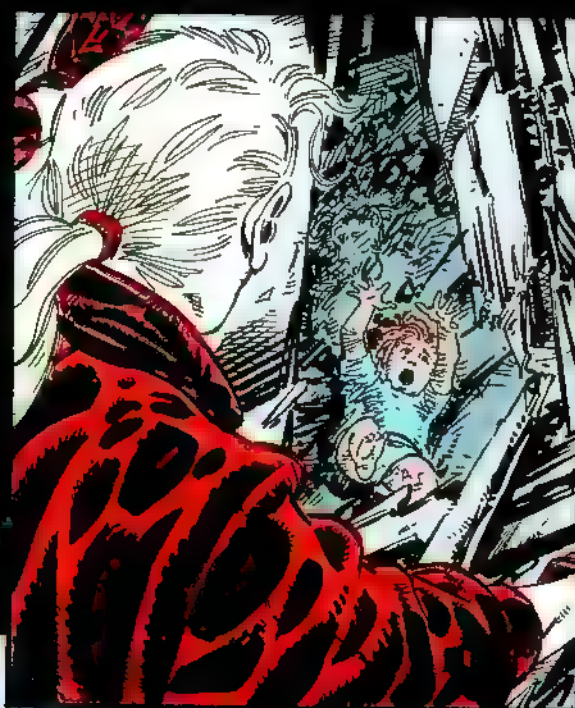
TONY, YOU
HAVE NO IDEA
HOW MUCH I
WISH THAT COULD
BE TRUE!

I DON'T
GET IT. SHE'S
INDESTRUCTIBLE,
LIKE SUPERMAN
OR SOMETHING.

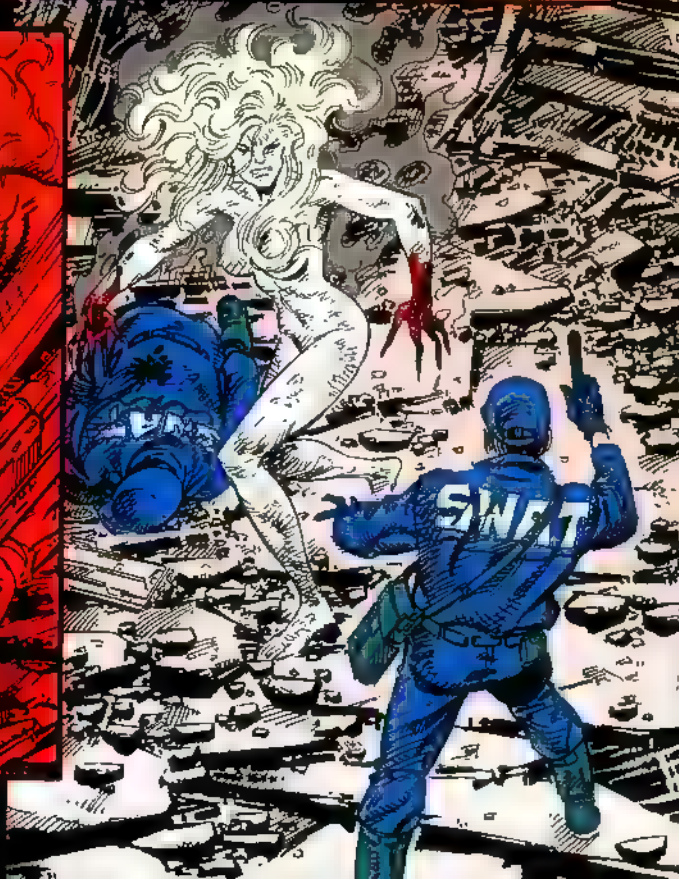
BUT...
SHE DOESN'T
LIKE IT?

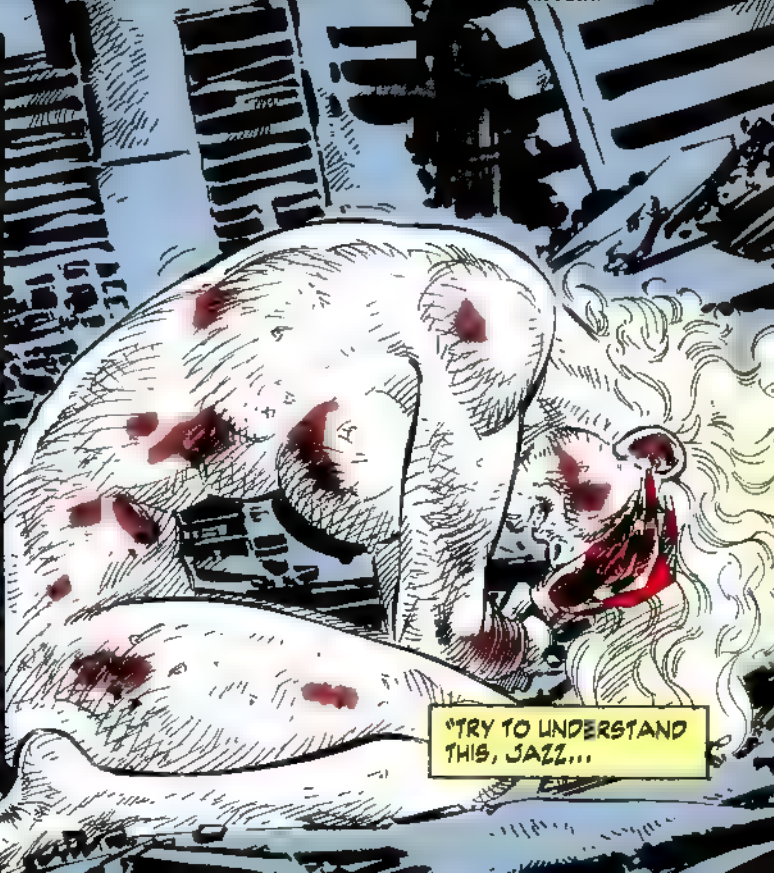
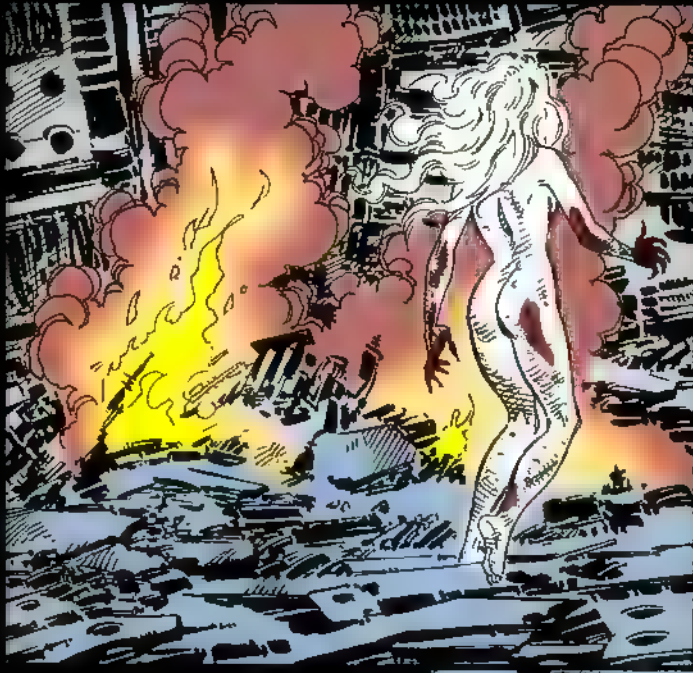
NO...

"SHE DOESN'T LIKE
IT AT ALL..."

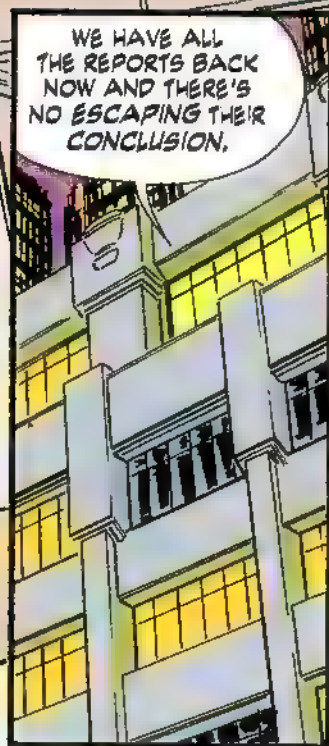








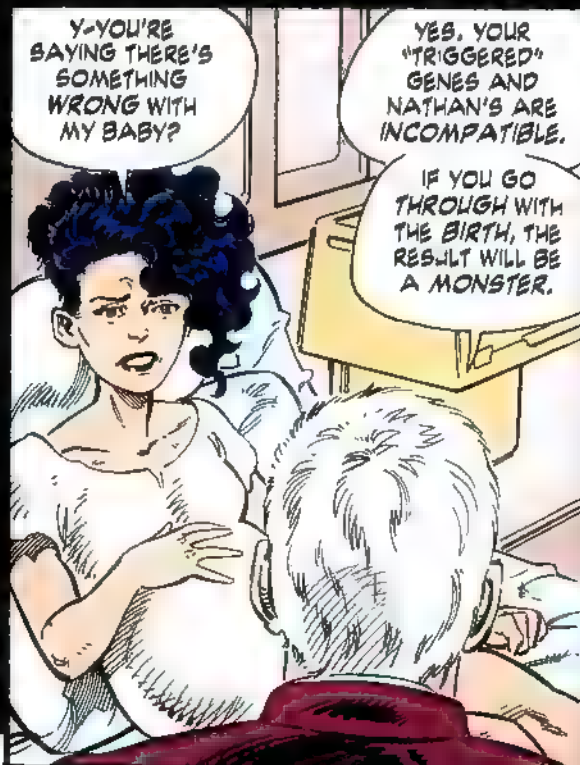
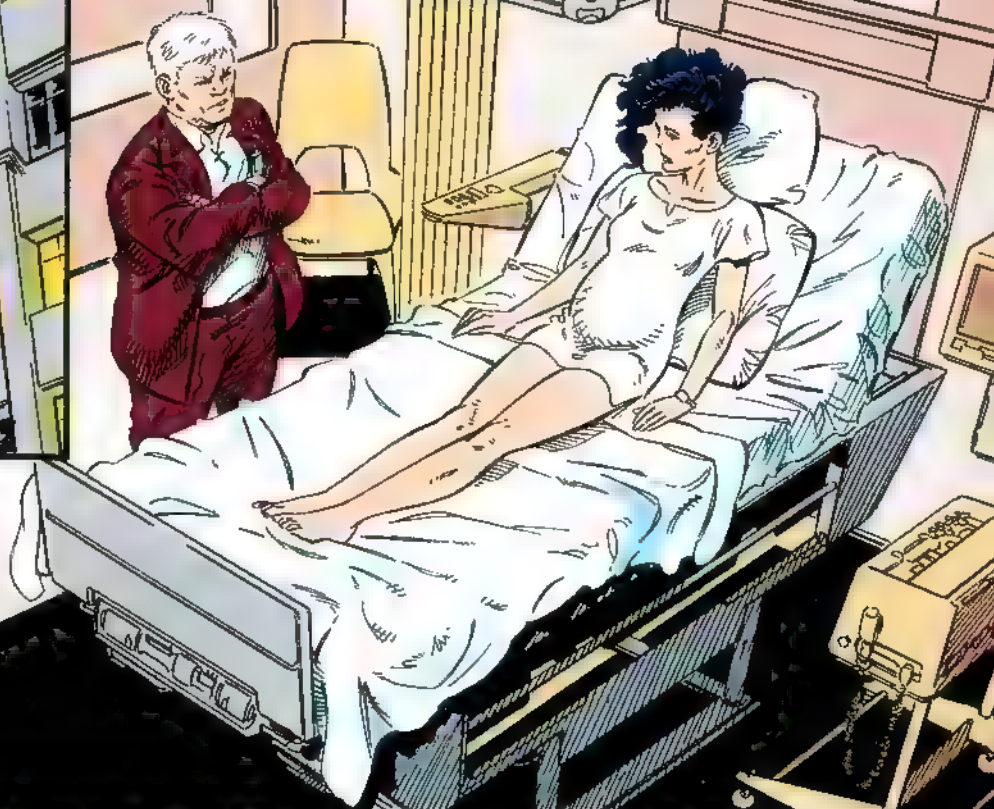
"TRY TO UNDERSTAND
THIS, JAZZ..."



WE HAVE ALL THE REPORTS BACK NOW AND THERE'S NO ESCAPING THEIR CONCLUSION.

YOU AND NATHAN CONCEIVED THAT CHILD YOU'RE CARRYING UNDER COMPLETELY UNCONTROLLED CONDITIONS.

AND UNLIKE NORMAL HUMANS, I'M AFRAID THAT IS AN OPTION YOU SIMPLY DO NOT HAVE.



Y-YOU'RE SAYING THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY BABY?

YES, YOUR "TRIGGERED" GENES AND NATHAN'S ARE INCOMPATIBLE.

IF YOU GO THROUGH WITH THE BIRTH, THE RESULT WILL BE A MONSTER.



'GO THROUGH WITH THE BIRTH..?' WHAT OTHER CHOICE DO I HAVE?

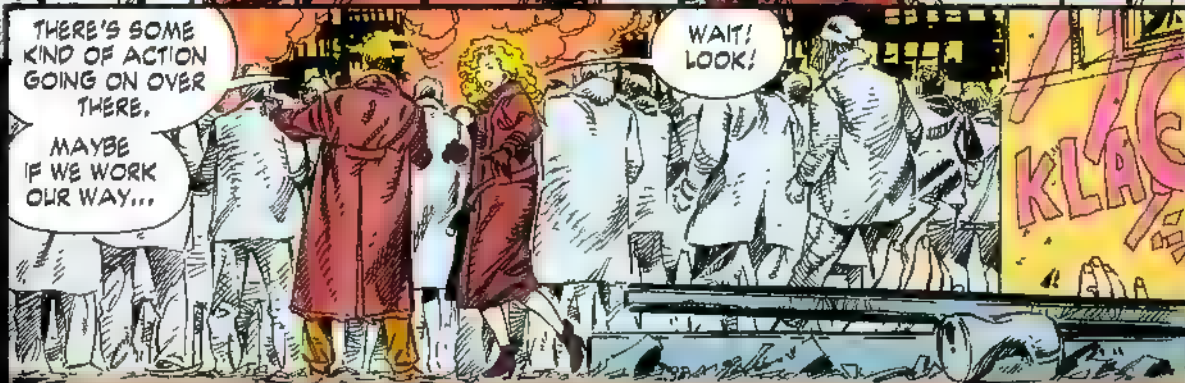
WELL... I KNOW THIS WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO COME TO GRIPS WITH, JASMINE...



"...BUT YOU DO HAVE THE OPTION OF TERMINATING THE PREGNANCY NOW."

I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING.

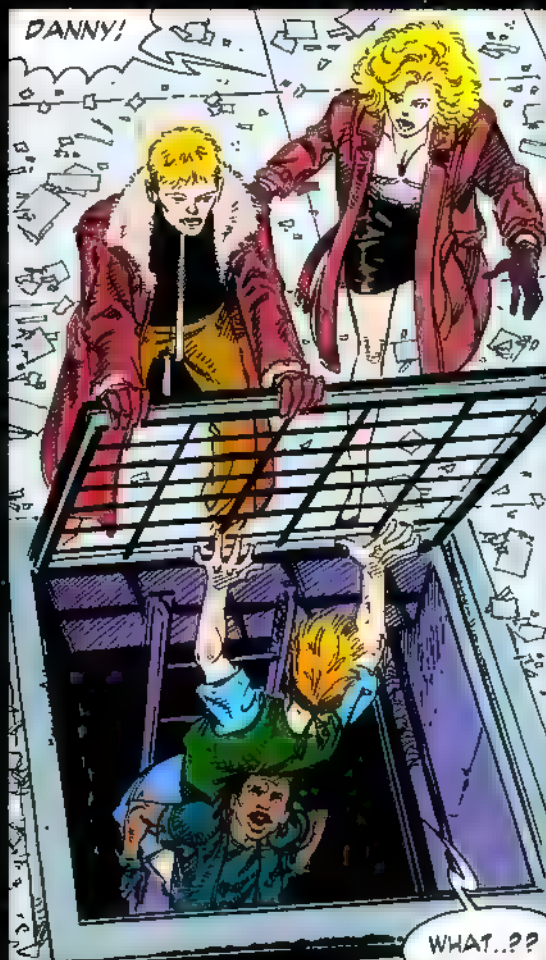
I GUESS THERE ARE SOME SITUATIONS IN WHICH GETTING TALLER DOESN'T HELP MUCH.



THERE'S SOME KIND OF ACTION GOING ON OVER THERE.

MAYBE IF WE WORK OUR WAY...

WAIT! LOOK!



DANNY!

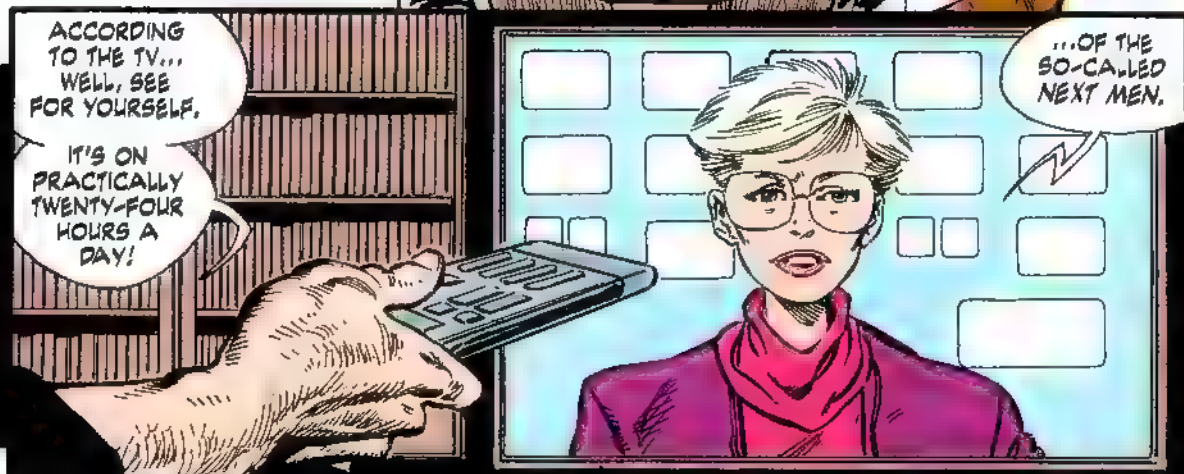
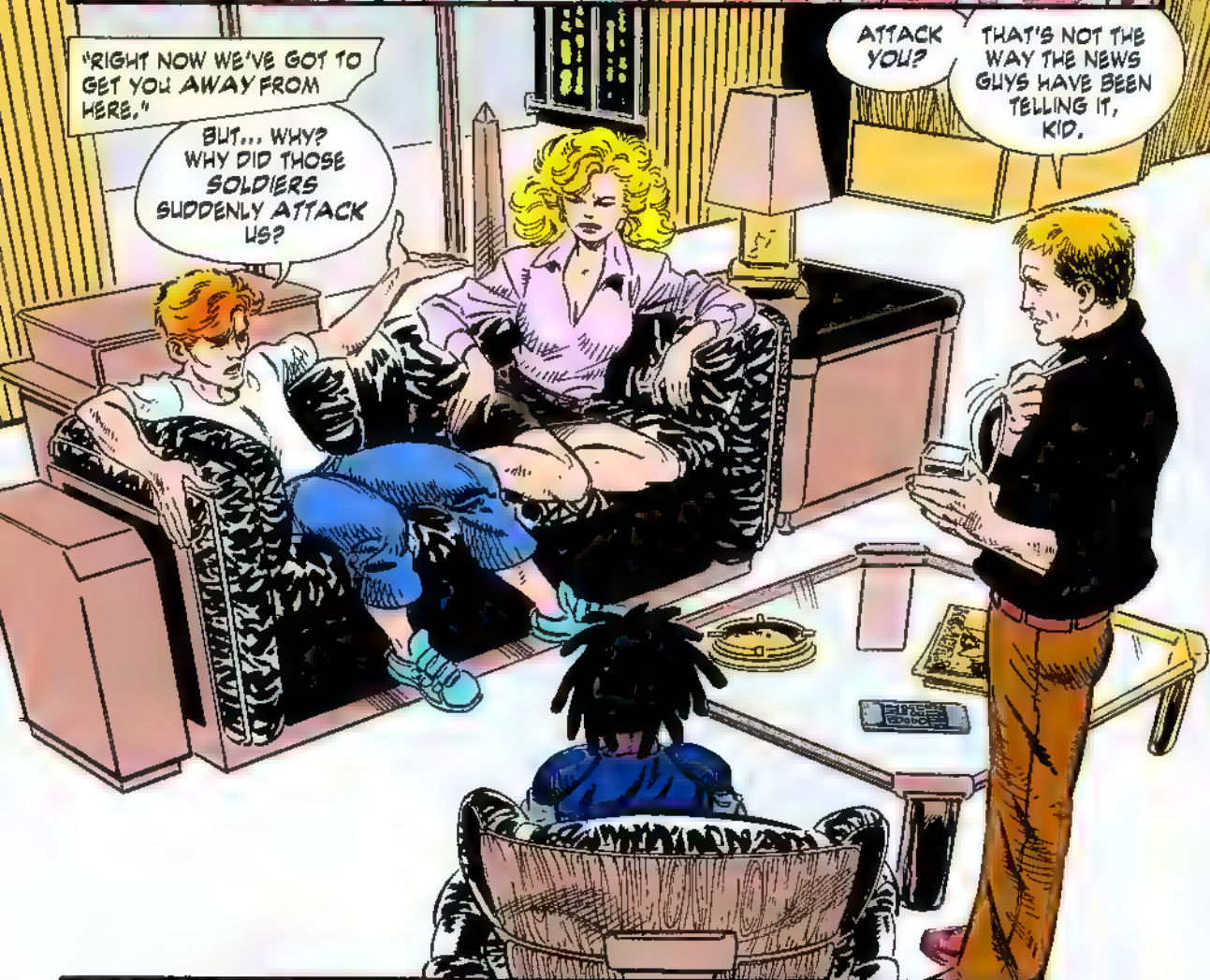
WHAT...??



QUICK! COVER YOURSELF!

IF THIS CROWD CATCHES SIGHT OF YOU, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT COULD HAPPEN!

THAT VOICE...? SANDY?? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



SO FAR AT
LEAST THIRTY-SIX
PEOPLE ARE KNOWN
TO BE DEAD...

...SIX IN THE
COMBINED POLICE
AND MILITARY FORCE
LEADING THE
ASSAULT...

...AND THE REST
NUMBERED AMONG
THE HOMELESS KNOWN
TO HAVE TAKEN REFUGE
IN THE ABANDONED
SUBWAY TUNNELS.

WHAT??

IT REMAINS
UNCLEAR AT THIS
POINT AS TO JUST
WHY THE NEXT MEN
CHOSE TO ATTACK
THE HOMELESS...

...BUT THEIR ESCAPE
LAST WEEK FROM
POLICE CUSTODY SEEMS
TO HAVE INVOLVED
BREAKING THROUGH
INTO THE SUBWAY.

FOR MORE,
WE TAKE YOU
NOW LIVE...

NO! NO!
WHAT ARE THEY
TALKING
ABOUT??

SANDY! THAT'S
NOT WHAT
HAPPENED! THE POLICE
ATTACKED
US!

YOU'VE GOT
TO BELIEVE
THAT!

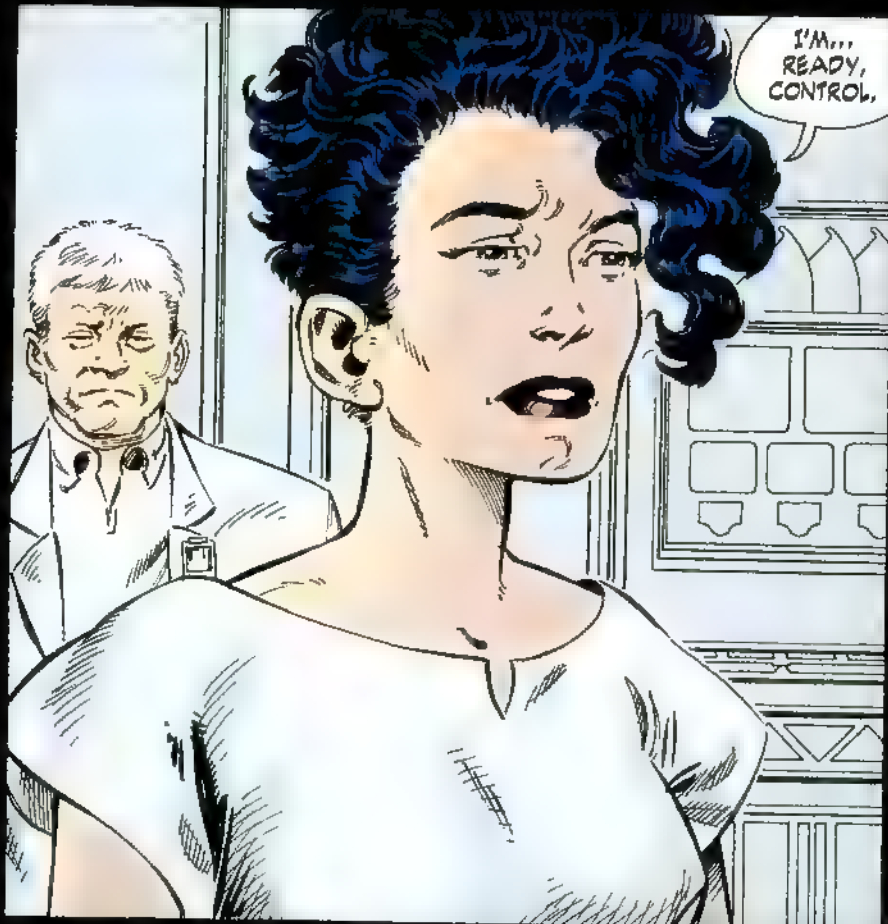
I
DO.

WE
DO.

"BUT THE REST OF THE
WORLD HAS OTHER
IDEAS!"

JASMINE?

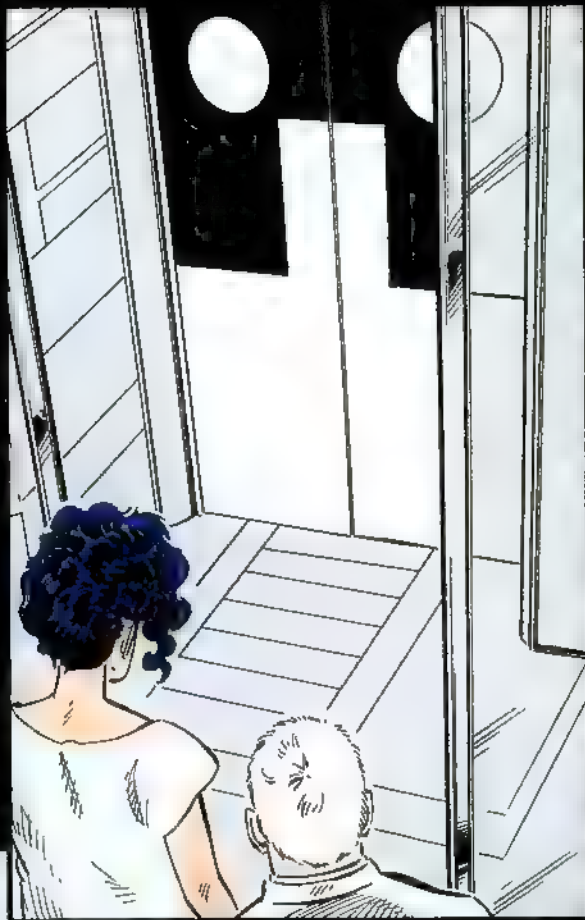
I'M...
READY,
CONTROL.

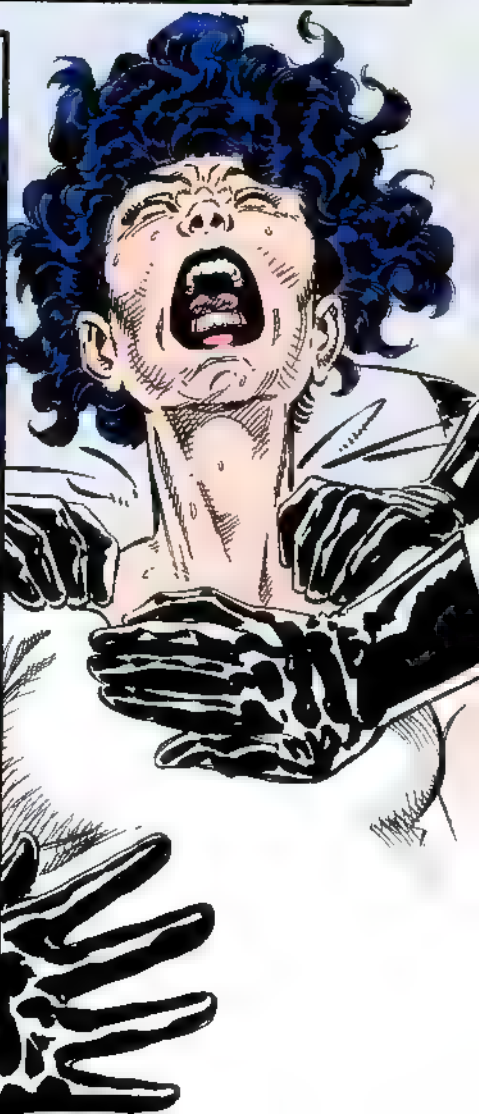
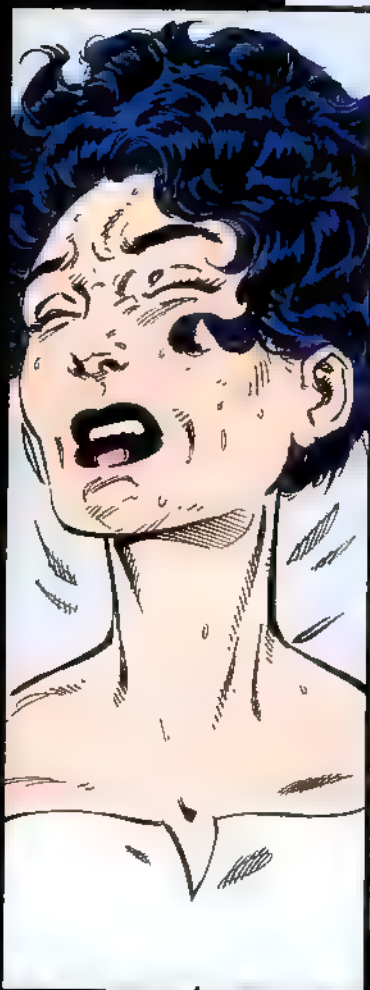


YOU'RE SURE,
NOW? I COULDN'T
LIVE WITH MYSELF
IF I THOUGHT I WAS
FORCING YOU INTO
THIS..?

NO, I'VE
MADE MY OWN
DECISION, THIS
IS... THE ONLY
THING TO DO.









THIS WAY.

IT SEEMS QUIETER THIS WAY.

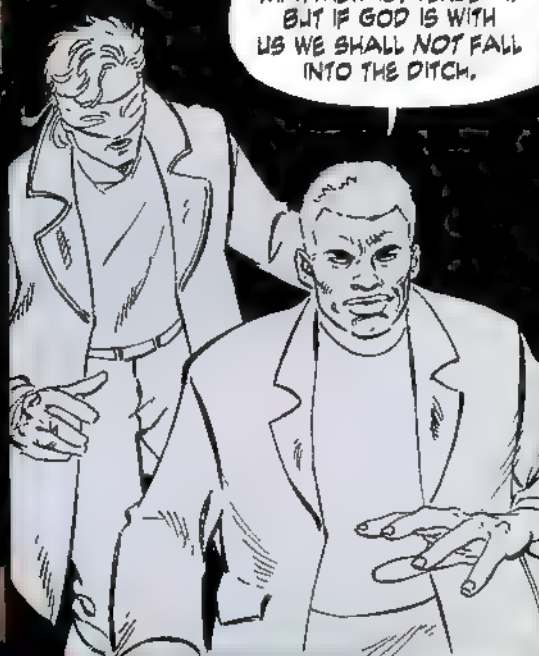
YES, I THINK THEY'RE STARTING TO PULL BACK. THEY MAY THINK WE'RE DONE FOR.

YOU CAN'T SEE ANYTHING?

NO, I PUT MY GLASSES IN MY POCKET SO CONTROL WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TRACK US.

THIS CLOTH PROTECTS MY EYES, BUT IT DOES NOTHING TO ISOLATE DETAILS. EFFECTIVELY I'M AS GOOD AS BLIND.

AND SO WE EMBODY MATTHEW 15, VERSE 14, BUT IF GOD IS WITH US WE SHALL NOT FALL INTO THE DITCH.



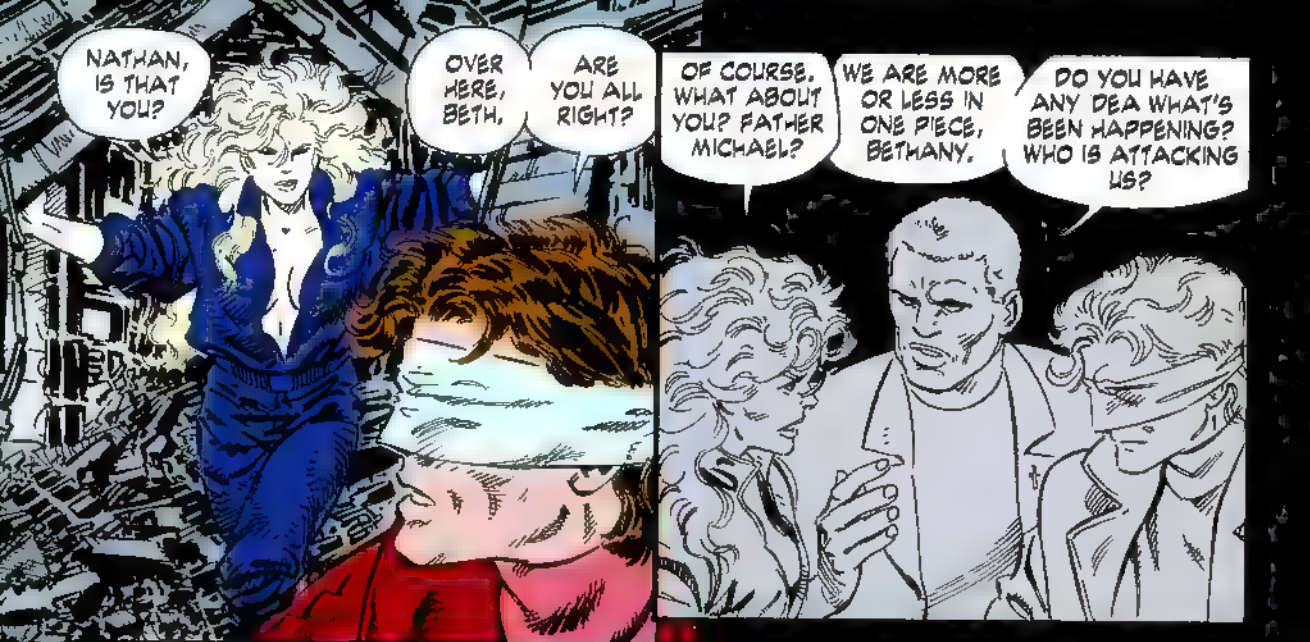
I... DON'T EXACTLY TAKE YOUR MEANING, FATHER.

IS THERE A DITCH HERE?

NEVER MIND. IF GOD WILLS WE GET THROUGH THIS ALIVE, THERE WILL BE TIME ENOUGH TO TEACH YOU.

NATHAN?





NATHAN,
IS THAT
YOU?

OVER
HERE,
BETH.

ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?

OF COURSE.
WHAT ABOUT
YOU? FATHER
MICHAEL?

WE ARE MORE
OR LESS IN
ONE PIECE,
BETHANY.

DO YOU HAVE
ANY IDEA WHAT'S
BEEN HAPPENING?
WHO IS ATTACKING
US?



I'M NOT
SURE. ELEMENTS
OF POLICE AND
MILITARY UNITS AS
FAR AS I CAN
TELL.

YES. AND
I THINK I SAW
SOME OF
CONTROL'S
PEOPLE.

JACK..?



IT'S
ME.

WE'D BETTER
KEEP MOVING.
THEY'VE STOPPED
FIRING, BUT THEY'RE
SWEEPING THE
TUNNELS BEHIND US.

THIS WAY,
IF WE GO INTO
THE LOWEST
LEVELS...

"...THEY WILL NOT BE
ABLE TO FIND US."

I THINK THIS
IS FAR ENOUGH.
I DON'T HEAR
THEM ANYMORE.

NO, THESE WERE
SOME OF THE FIRST
LINES SHUT DOWN.
THEY WILL NOT LOOK
FOR YOU HERE.

"YOU..?"
BUT... YOU'RE
STAYING WITH
US..?

NO, JACK, MY
PLACE IS WITH THE
CHILDREN, WITH THE
PEOPLE WHO HAVE
PUT THEIR FAITH IN
ME.

YOU CAN FIND
YOUR WAY TO SAFETY
FROM HERE, BUT I
MUST GO BACK.

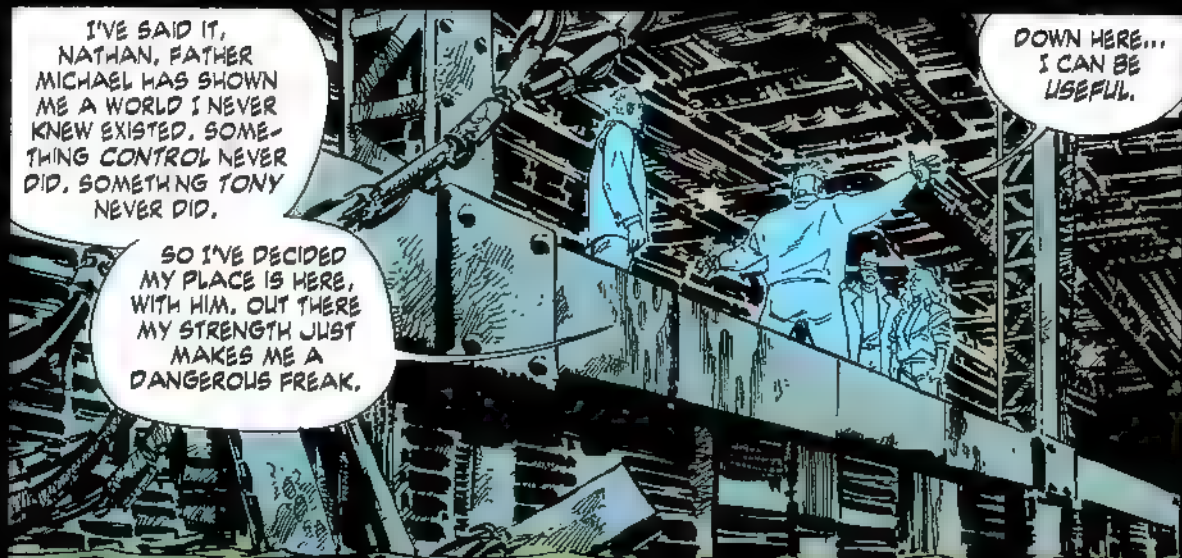
THEN...
I'M COMING
WITH YOU.

JACK...

NO ARGUMENT
THIS TIME,
NATHAN, AND NO
TRICKS FROM YOU,
BETHANY.

IF THERE'S ANY-
ONE ON EARTH WHO
COULD HURT YOU, I
THINK THAT PERSON
IS ME.

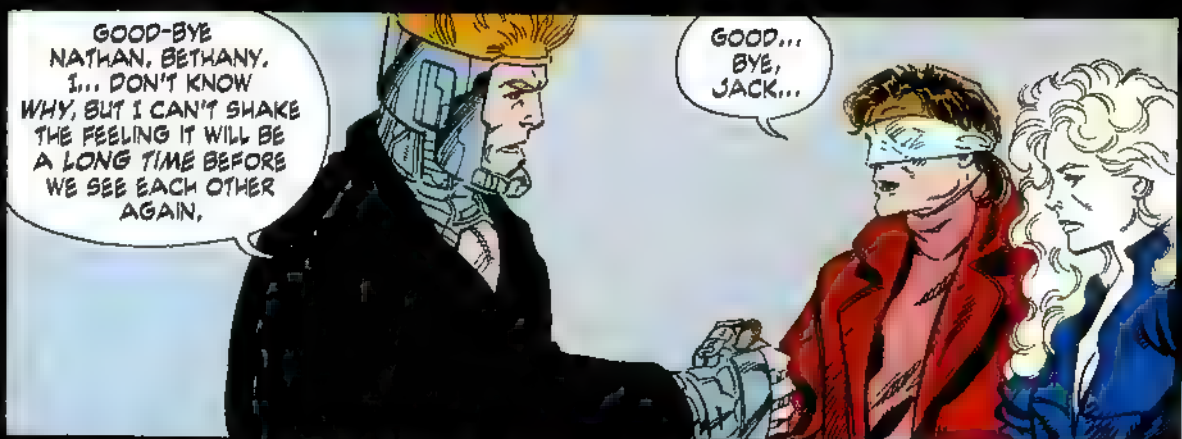
ALL RIGHT,
JACK, SAY
YOUR PEECE.



I'VE SAID IT,
NATHAN, FATHER
MICHAEL HAS SHOWN
ME A WORLD I NEVER
KNEW EXISTED. SOME-
THING CONTROL NEVER
DID. SOMETHING TONY
NEVER DID.

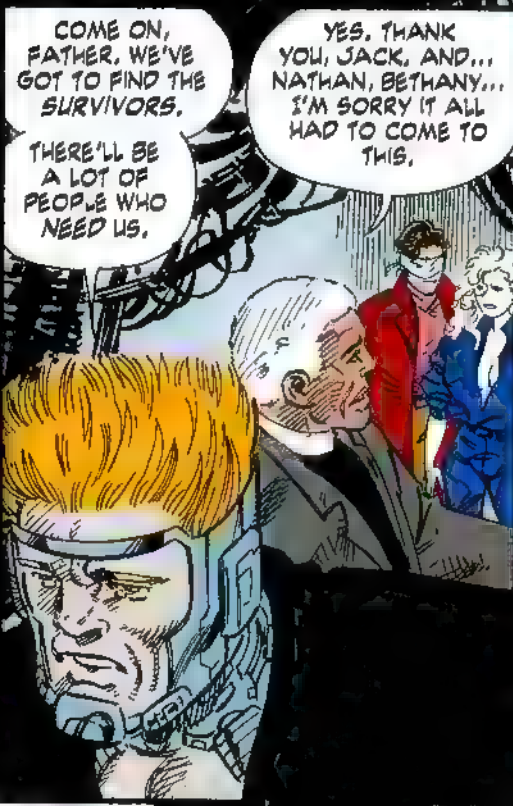
SO I'VE DECIDED
MY PLACE IS HERE,
WITH HIM. OUT THERE
MY STRENGTH JUST
MAKES ME A
DANGEROUS FREAK.

DOWN HERE...
I CAN BE
USEFUL.



GOOD-BYE
NATHAN, BETHANY.
I... DON'T KNOW
WHY, BUT I CAN'T SHAKE
THE FEELING IT WILL BE
A LONG TIME BEFORE
WE SEE EACH OTHER
AGAIN.

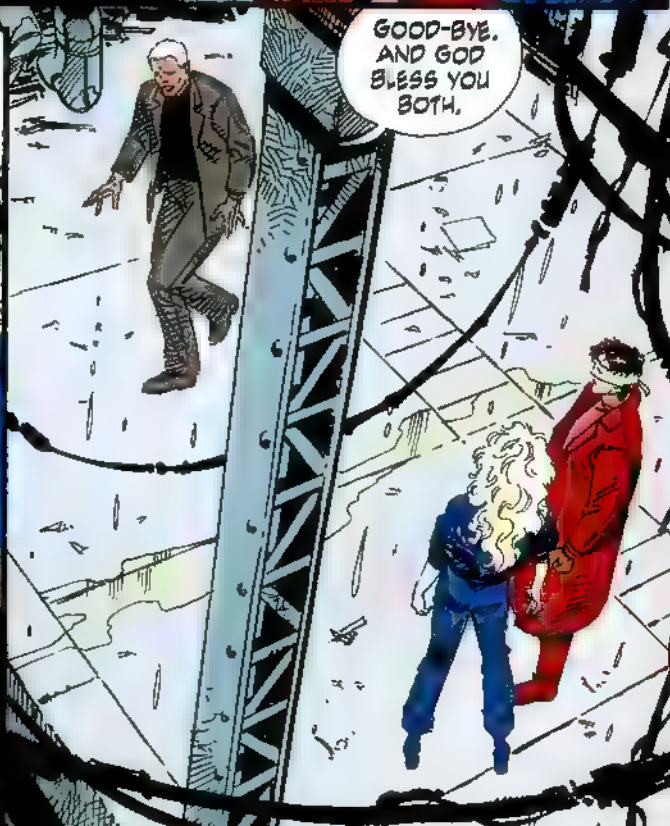
GOOD...
BYE,
JACK...



COME ON,
FATHER. WE'VE
GOT TO FIND THE
SURVIVORS.

THERE'LL BE
A LOT OF
PEOPLE WHO
NEED US.

YES, THANK
YOU, JACK, AND...
NATHAN, BETHANY...
I'M SORRY IT ALL
HAD TO COME TO
THIS.



GOOD-BYE.
AND GOD
BLESS YOU
BOTH.



WELL,
BETH?

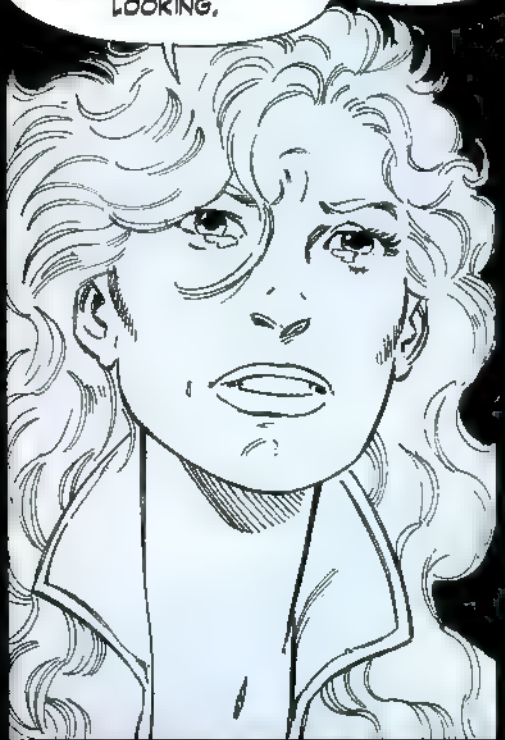
LOOKS
LIKE IT'S
YOU AND
ME.

YES.

YES.

I HAVE NO IDEA
WHERE DANNY OR JAZZ
ARE. I WOULDN'T KNOW
WHERE OR HOW TO BEGIN
LOOKING.

AS YOU
SAY,
NATHAN...



IT'S
YOU AND
ME.





RETURN OF A FLAME ABOUT THIS HIGH

The boy had traveled many months through treacherous terrain. Around him the high mountains loomed like shadowed gods, tall and inaccessible, yet still he pushed on, higher and higher, as the pleasant landscape dropped away and the living rock bared itself to the biting wind like the flesh of flagellants.

Sleeping only when total exhaustion pummeled him into a fitful unconsciousness, the boy worked his way up the unforgiving face of the tallest mountain. His hands and feet bled, droplets like crimson tears on the windswept snow, his boots and gloves long since devoured by the fangs of rock he climbed.

His last food had been days before, weeks before, yet he needed no sustenance as he pushed on up the mountain, for there burned within his bosom the unquenchable fires of stalwart resolution. Knowledge lay ahead. Knowledge for which his whole life had been a single quest. The Old Man lived in a cave at the top of this tallest mountain, and, if the legends were to be believed, the Old Man *remembered*.

And the twelfth day of the climb, as the peaceful green valleys shrank away to dreams beneath him, and as the grim specter of doubt pressed harder and harder upon the battered armor of his resolve, the boy mounted the last crag and stood before the ragged black opening of a cave. But was it *the* cave? The home of the Old Man?

Leaving bloody footprints on the windhewn rock, the boy crossed the narrow ledge and stepped into the umber darkness. Almost at once the world seemed to change. The howling wind died down to nothing, and with the end of his banshee song came also the vanishing of the icy claws and daggers with which it had ripped the boy's skin. It was warm in the cave. Warm and quiet. It seemed as though the boy had stepped across the threshold not into a cavern sliced by Time and Nature into the face of the mountain, but into something closer to a memory.

Scarcely able to believe what he felt must be true, the boy moved deeper into the cave, growing stronger with each step, until he passed through a narrow defile and entered a great chamber beyond. The warmth came from this chamber. The dark ceiling swirled and coiled with the smoke of a single fire that blazed robustly in the center of the cavern. All about, the walls were piled high with ancient paper, yellowed, pungent.

And in a niche in the far wall, small, and at this distance seemingly lifeless, sat the wizened figure of an old man. Cautiously the boy approached. He came within a half dozen short paces of the tiny figure. He saw that the frail chest rose and fell slowly, steadily, and that in the lap of the dozing figure lay an open booklet, once gaudy colors faded like those of the robes that hung in loose folds about the old man—the Old Man.

"Master?" The boy's voice was scarcely more than a whisper, quickly swallowed by the vastness of the hidden chamber.

The Old Man stirred. His bald head lifted and his eyes rose to meet the boy's. They were not the eyes of an old man. They were the eyes of a child, full of wonder and mischievous delight. "There is no need to shout," he said, and he smiled.

"Master," said the boy, "I have traveled almost all my life, following the legends of your name, because it is said that..." and he hesitated, fearful that the Old Man would deny the legends, "...that you remember."

The Old Man nodded. "I remember." He waved a trembling hand to encompass the contents of the chamber. "I remember a time when the matter of comic books was other than what it has become."

"Stories. Yes." The boy nodded. "I have been told there were once things called 'stories'."

"No," the old man snapped. "Not stories. Stories died too long ago for even me to remember. But I remember when the matter of comic books was... *comic books*." He tapped the dry pages on his bony lap. "Paper and ink. Drawings. Words. I remember when the joy was in the holding in one's hand of a gateway into a realm of wonder. Before the cards, the tapes, the CDs, the posters, the model kits, the shirts, the pogs, the endless, endless gimmicks which became themselves the things to seek!"

The boy stared in wonderment. "Wow!" he said at last. "You really are old!"

BRIDE OF A FLAME ABOUT THIS HIGH

The other day, Mike Mignola called to read me Todd McFarlane's response to a letter in *Spawn*, a response in which the Toddler professed himself unable to comprehend why I was so "down" on Image Comics, since—in his view—the people behind Image were all inspired by my work, so I should feel like a "proud papa" when I look at all Image has achieved.

Hmmm... Kind of like a proud papa who's watched his offspring burn down and pave over the family vineyard because they could make more money by turning the land into a parking lot.

Well, at the risk of flogging a dead horse—to phrase a coin—here, simply and succinctly, is an easily readable list which will once and for all define my take on the difference between good and bad comics. I leave it to your own interpretation as to just how many points in the second column correspond to the work produced by Image.

Good Comics

- Solid stories
- Detailed artwork
- Subtlety of Expression
- Varied characters
- Heroes
- Moral characters
- Innovation
- Dependable publishing schedules*
- No gimmicks
- Love of comics

Bad Comics

- Undetectable stories
- Speedlines
- Gritted teeth
- Indistinguishable characters
- Mercenaries
- Killers
- Imitation
- Constant missed shipping
- Gimmicks galore
- All of the above

NEXIMEN

There! I wish I could say this was my last word on the subject, but I fear this will not—maybe cannot—be the case. Not, at least, as long as there are people who simply do not understand what comics are all about.

*Yeah—I know Dark Horse falls down on this one, but they've never claimed to be Comic-Book Messiahs, so we can cut 'em a *little* slack.

SON OF A FLAME ABOUT THIS HIGH

As a medium, the comic book is almost seventy years old. That's a big chunk of history, especially the history of a nation as young as the United States. Yet there is no single, cohesive written record of the birth and growth of the industry. Jim Steranko published his two-volume *History of Comics*, which is invaluable if you can actually *find* a copy, and Don and Maggie Thompson gave us the equally elusive *All in Color for a Dime*. But neither of these come within twenty years of where we now stand. 1991 saw the publication of Les Daniel's *Marvel* book, a surprisingly "warts-and-all" look at the history of the biggest company, given that it was an "approved biography."

However, a single source that covers the whole industry up to the present does not exist—Dark Horse, I know, has a history in the works, but it remains to be seen how valuable it will be—and largely because of this, two things are happening: a whole "generation" of comics fans and professionals have come on the scene with no awareness of what has gone before—no sense of history—and, what little sense of history there is, is constantly undermined by people who reinvent themselves and their place in the industry with every breath they take. The newly spawned "Defiant" line recently (as I write) issued a press release which presented a history of their founder so alien to the truth it inspired a torrent of letters to *CBG* picking off the major points of fantasy—one or two in great detail. Likewise, the core group at one company present themselves as the original champions of creators' rights, even though they started their careers well after that battle was fought and won.

This would not be a great problem, were it not for the fact that anything which gets into print tends to become gospel, to be repeated and "referenced" with little research on the part of those doing the quoting. My own bitter experience with Superman, for instance, was made doubly painful by writers who looked no further than the previous article for their "facts" on what I was up to. By the end of my two years with the character, the tapestry of half-truths and outright fabrications had grown so large that chunks of it were even quoted verbatim in *Time*.

So it behooves us, I think, to clear away the detritus and assemble a true history of comics. One that will tell the story of the industry as it happened, not as some of the latest pretenders *wish* it had.

GHOST OF A FLAME ABOUT THIS HIGH

People often ask me "How can I get a letter printed?" When I tell them there are no set rules, no guaranteed methods, they always go away saddened, at best, or convinced I'm deliberately deceiving them, at worst. But the fact of the matter is, there's no one sure method of getting a letter printed. It all depends on the individual whims of those who chose the letters, be it the editor, the writer, or some flunky.

However, while there are no set rules, there are certain things you can do which will up your chances considerably, and I thought I'd take a bit of space here and list some of them. Remember, though, that these are really nothing more than my own reasons for picking a letter for publication, and they do not hold one hundred percent of the time even for me.

(1) Type or print neatly. It should be fairly obvious, I would have thought, that a legible letter is going to have a much better chance of getting printed than one which is written in longhand with a 6H pencil on blue paper. Sometimes, though, it seems as if there's an element of Fandom which is engaged in some kind of contest to see who can come up with the most impossible-to-read combination of paper, tool, and writing style.

(2) Keep it short. Long letters sometimes get printed—back in the days when he was a fan, writing to Marvel, Peter Sanderson was viewed as something of a godsend to writers who did not want to labor over the letter page. Peter's letters were pithy, intelligent, and long. One letter would fill most of the allotted space—but this is not really the best approach. One of the reasons most companies recommend you send your comments on a post card is that this automatically limits your space and compels you to be terse.

(3) Get to your point as quickly as possible. There are few things more frustrating than having to weed out the extraneous commentary in order to get to the point of a letter—especially since it is the (ideal) goal of the letter column to maintain the tone of the letter even when much of the copy is being cut. Rambling letters can be fun to read, but they're a pain to edit.

(4) Don't suck up. There is a common perception in many would-be letter writers that only those letters which praise with great praise get selected. A look at the letters I've run in the last two years should disabuse you of this, but the myth remains. And fulsome praise, believe me, is worse than no praise at all.

(5) Don't ask questions that are likely to be answered in the next couple of issues. Or that are not likely to be answered, if the writer is obviously trying to keep a secret. Many letters are simply lists of such questions, and since I am one of those who generally tries to avoid the "as you know by now" style of answer, such letters are not likely to see print unless they actually manage to touch on something I've inadvertently left out or which has been made confusing by a typo or coloring error.

And that, as the man said, is pretty much that. Again, not hard and fast rules, but enough to serve as a guide, I hope. Oh, and by the way, a P.S. saying "Please print this letter" almost *never* works.

The first appearance of Mike Mignola's Hellboy is just the icing on the cake in *John Byrne's Next Men: Faith!* The Next Men, having been falsely convicted of murder, break out of jail and go underground...literally. They head for the abandoned subway tunnels of New York and find them less abandoned than everyone thought, filled with a secret community of homeless people. But they can't stay hidden forever, and when the government's forces finally track down the Next Men it becomes both an exercise in survival and a lesson in betrayal.

This trade paperback collects issues 19-22 of the hit series...

John Byrne's
NEXT MEN
FAITH
BOOK 4

Suggested for Mature Readers
\$14.95 U.S., \$20.95 CANADA

ISBN 1-56971-055-4



a Bchry Scan



9 781569 710555

A DARK HORSE COMICS COLLECTION

